British military policy and the defence of India: a study of British military policy, plans and preparations during the Russian crisis, 1876-1880.

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BRITISH MILITARY POLICY AND THE DEFENCE OF INDIA:

A STUDY OF BRITISH MILITARY POLICY, PLANS AND PREPARATIONS DURING THE RUSSIAN CRISIS, 1875 - 1880.

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Synopsis.

The aim of this thesis is to articulate and analyse, from the point of view of the defence of India, the British military and strategic implications of the Russian crisis, 1875 - 1880, the greatest crisis involving a major European power to confront British soldiers and statesmen between the Crimean and Great Wars. It is hoped thereby perhaps indirectly to illuminate the making of military policy in the immediate post-Cardwellian era, the influence of military, especially Indian military, considerations upon European diplomacy, and the genesis of a scientific approach to questions of Indian frontier defence. Chapter I analyses the character of the Russian threat to India in the Near East but mainly in Central Asia in terms of the emergence of Pan-Slavism, Milyutin's Prussian-inspired military reforms and the adventurism of Russia's Central Asian policy; and sets in contradistinction the fundamental factors governing the formulation of a British Indian defence policy - political influence and intelligence facilities in the buffer states, and military and naval capacity for offensive warfare. It exposes by implication the fundamental duality in Britain's Indian military policy that was to be aggravated and intensified by the simultaneous Russian threats to Merv and Constantinople. Chapter II, emphasising the shift in the strategical centre of gravity from Central Asia to Europe, discusses Colonel Home's mission to Constantinople as the first real attempt at defence planning, which showed that Constantinople could not be defended militarily except under such extraordinary conditions as would allow of the

Reserves being called out, produced a wide divergence of views over war policy and suggested alternatives in the defence of Constantinople, by naval action alone, the assistance of a Continental ally, or by territorial compensation or all three. Chapter III discusses Cabinet military policy in terms of these three factors in view of an imminent Russian occupation of Constantinople; but the failure to achieve an alliance, to make adequate naval or military preparations or to create a reliable intelligence service resulted in some ludicrous defence measures that were fortunately averted by Plevna. Against this background, chapter IV discusses the Indian military policy conceived in the face of a simultaneous Russian threat to Merv, and shows how Lytton's attempts to gain time by raising the Central Asian tribes were frustrated by European complications, a surly Salisbury and finally Plevna. Chapter V analyses British military policies, plans and preparations provoked by San Stephano and tries to show how far they could have brought victory had war with Russia eventuated and how far they contributed to bringing Russia to the Berlin conference table. At the same time, the Cyprus Convention policy showed the ascendancy of Indian defence over European interests, and chapter VI discusses the final stage of this development in a discussion of the second Afghan War.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

i. General Considerations.

The legacy of Peter the Great bequeathed upon British soldiers and statesmen their most intractable imperial problem: how may an essentially maritime power best defend distant extensive territorial possessions against the encroachment and possible invasion of a rival, contiguous and predominantly military empire. For the first century of Britain's presence in India, the problem did not attain serious proportions: Russia had been recently allied in coalition against France; technology and communications had not yet conquered the vast intervening distances nor conferred upon Russia the strategic advantages of interior lines; and the earliest escapades towards Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan through the Caucasus and Central Asia had little strategic substance. At the same time Britain's interest in India was mercantile rather than military and utilitarian rather than mythical; the great social and economic questions of the 1820's, 1830's and 1840's dominated the domestic political scene; the revolution in communications, especially the opening of the Suez Canal, had not accentuated the politico-religio-strategical importance of Constantinople (which was only created by the Mutiny): sea-power conferred all the strategic advantages of operating on exterior lines; and Britain's best war policy against a continental power had been memorably summed up by Sir Charles Pasley in 1808 in appreciation of all these factors - a purely amphibious policy employing 'maritime armies' in harassing and

diversionary roles in support of a continental ally, a policy which in fact if not in letter became entrenched in the official mind by the political uses to which the fleet was put between 1815 and 1853.[1]

But while such a policy in its day may have perhaps been strategically plausible against France, the conditions were somewhat altered when the potential enemy was found to be a Eurasian military empire of the scale of Russia; and by 1876 the need for another form of defensive and war policy had become startlingly real. Moreover, the defence of India question was closely linked with the liquid nature of European politics and diplomacy brought about by the collapse of France, the rise of Prussia, the emergence of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Slavism as rival politico-religious forces, and the lingering decay of the Ottoman Empire; with the revolution in warfare that had occurred between Sebastopol and Sedan; and with the extension of Russia's naval and imperial power towards the Straits, the Caucasus and Central Asia at a moment when Britain had assumed the responsibility for the military government and defence policy of post-Mutiny India, when the limits of British expansion in India had become stable; when the allegiance and sovereignty of the recognized buffer states - Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan - had become shaky, undecided and susceptible to novel and irregular forms of corrosive warfare - intrigue and insurrection; and when Britain's naval and military capacity for conducting

1. Sir C. Pasley, The Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire, London, Clowes, 1914; C.J.Bartlett, Great Britain and Sea Power, 1815-1853, Oxford, Clarendon, 1963.

sustained operations against a major European military power could be, and was, seriously questioned. All these factors seemed to suggest that in a future confrontation with Russia the ancient amphibious character of British war policy would become extremely difficult to reconcile with the novelty of an Indian 'continental' military policy. Wolseley had urged:[2]

> In all our dealings with India, military considerations must ever be of paramount importance: and as the only real interests that we have in Central Asia are owing to our position in India, British policy in the East, to be thoroughly sound must be based upon the military exigencies of that position. The wisdom or the folly of any line of conduct we may adopt in reference to this question can only be justly established by weighing the manner and degree in which it is calculated to affect our military position. Presuming it to be generally conceded that the defence of India - or in other words the preservation of our power, our prestige, in the East, is a military question, it behoves us to study it as a strategical problem.

But the strategical realities of the situation were not comforting. The Russian heartland constituted a vast central base of historic defensive strength and proven unassailability, whose only avenues susceptible to invasion lay through a series of peripheral bulwark states stretching from Poland in the west to Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan in the south and China in the east. Its decisive points were few and comparatively invulnerable to amphibious forces. Huge armies acting with all the strategic advantages of concentration along interior lines of railway, rapidity of movement, weighty support and friendly population were

2. G.J.Wolseley, "Our Coming Guest," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, CXIII, June 1873, pp.427-46; Wolseley to R.Wolseley, 15 August 1873, Wolseley Family Papers, Wolseley described this article as "the worst thing I have ever written." Wolseley to Lytton, 10 August 1877, Lytton Papers, I.O.MSS.Eur.E.218/517/4.

able to bring instant and massive retaliation to bear on the five most likely areas of intervention - the Baltic, Black Sea, Caucasus, Central Asia and Far East. Britain's ability to wage war against this or any other continental land power was determined by four fundamental strategic considerations: her military power in terms of national resources and those of allies, actual or potential; her naval power in terms of maritime resources, allied co-operation to ensure the freedom and security of her communications and naval bases close to the areas against which amphibious operations would be conducted; intelligence; and finally, and most importantly, a predominant political (if not military) influence in those strategic areas through which intervention was possible. Even assuming the balance of the first three considerations to be in Britain's favour, her capacity to wage offensive war against Russia or actively to defend her land and maritime communications with India against Russian encroachment was decisively conditioned by the last: and the essence of the Russian crisis or 'defence of India' question for Britain lay in her struggle not necessarily to reassert a predominant political ascendancy in Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan but to prevent Russia from doing so. The problem was essentially one of political warfare; but Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan were potential military as well as political battlefields; only from these peripheral bases was it possible to defend Britain's arterial communications and interests; only from them was it possible to launch a counter-offensive, for these were areas of recent Russian conquest, subordination or intimidation, some with long traditions of anarchic rebellion, whose potential

for insurrectionary warfare could be counted upon as certain. At the same time, failure to obtain that political ascendancy before striking at Russia threatened to engulf the country and its expeditionary forces in the profitless abyss of Turkish, Persian or Afghan revolution and to embroil them in all the disadvantages and inconveniences - political and military - attendant upon a secondary and possibly widespread insurrectionary war, and by offending Moslem susceptibilities to run the risk of a second great Mutiny. If, in addition to this, the first three conditions of Britain's comparative military position could not be satisfied, the resultant situation would amply fit Andrassy's aphorism (endorsed by Salisbury) that a war between Russia and England would be "like a fight between a shark and a wolf. They may show any amount of mutual animosity, but after snapping at each other, they can do nothing more than pass on."[3] Any concept of an offensive military policy being therefore implausible, and diplomatic remonstrances having, or seeming to have, no military backing, the question of 'the defence of India' would become one of 'defence' rather than 'defiance'; of strategy in its widest, most subtle sense rather than of purely military considerations; of manoevres in time and space, in diplomacy, mechanics and psychology without recourse to war. At this level, true strategy and politics were one, demanding an appreciation of the realities of and inter-relationship between diplomacy and military force. The manoevre which by conceding

3. Andrassy to Beust, secret and confidential, 22 June 1877, FO/Austria/917:D.E.Lee, "The Anglo-Austrian Understanding of 1877," Slavonic Review, X, 1931, pp.189-200, 449-65; Salisbury to Lytton, private, 13 July 1877, Lytton Papers, I.O.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/1.

space gained time, or by rapid action saved space; the manoevre which brought an ally into the field or which placated or overawed a dangerous neutral would be more serviceable and often more valuable than declaring a casus belli or gaining an important strategical point. The central issue of the Eastern Question therefore was not only where to draw the line of eventual confrontation with Russia, defining those points beyond which a Russian advance made an active British resistance imperative, but by what means, by what combination of diplomacy, psychology and apparent military force this could best be accomplished.

The areas most vital to British-Indian interests were four-fold: the Mediterranean sea-route (the control of which could at any time be disputed by a hostile combination of Mediterranean naval powers - France, Italy or Greece - or by the presence of a Russian naval base in the east end of the Mediterranean, in the Aegean or along the littoral of Asia Minor, Syria or Palestine); the linch-pin of Suez and Egypt (which, being under the loose suzereinty of the Ottoman Empire, was susceptible to the same though indirect threats as Constantinople and was anyway open to a land invasion from the direction of Syria and Arabia); the Indian sea-route and Persian Gulf (which were open to disruption by Russian light forces moving down the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, or by Russian squadrons establishing themselves in the Gulf); and finally, Afghanistan and the North-West Frontier of India which under suitable conditions were open to two kinds of attack - regular and insurrectionary. In Clausewitzian terms, the centres of gravity of the whole politcal and strategical struggle between Russia

and Britain for the control of the peripheral barrier states, the true keys of India, were generally acknowledged to be Constantinople and Merv not so much because they were materially or strategically defensible, but because their control by Russia assured her of that ascendant political influence in Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan which would at once make possible the political and strategical conditions necessary physically to disrupt British sea communications and invade India, and complicate if not prevent any British ideas of intervention. From the point of view of British diplomacy and defence policy, however, Constantinople and Merv posed two quite different problems. The fate of Constantinople was intimately bound up with the European balance of power, with Austro-Russian rivalry and with Pan-Slavic aspirations; the threat to Constantinople was likely to come in the form of a regular Russian invasion to which Britain, militarily speaking, could only oppose amphibious expeditionary forces. The fate of Merv was bound up with the whole question of 'face' in the East; but the character of the threat here lay in the direction of intrigue and insurrection to which Britain was best equipped to oppose regular armies. Thus British-Indian defence policy would be inclined to take two quite different but simultaneous forms, amphibious and continental, which to be ultimately successful would have to be co-ordinated and correlated in some way. The single over-riding consideration common to both and the fundamental justification of Britain's Eastern policy and concern for the defence of India since the great Mutiny lay in the state of Moslem feeling and more particularly in the revival of

Pan-Islamism as a rival politico-religious force to Pan-Slavism. That Constantinople was the citadel of Mohammedanism magnified in British eyes the religio-strategic importance of the Turkish capital to an almost inviolate degree. So far as it was in their power to do so, it would be necessary and desirable at all times never to antagonize the Sultan, the Porte or the Amir. Such a negative policy was based on a misapprehension of the prevalence and vigour of the Sultan-Caliph's influence and of the Pan-Islamic movement in general, but the alternative was a risk that could not afford to be taken, and the British-Indian authorities remained acutely sensitive to what happened at Constantinople. Indeed, Constantinople constituted the true meeting place of European, British and Indian interests: only from Constantinople would it be possible to establish that ascendant British influence throughout Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan, or deny the development of such to the Russians; only from Constantinople would it be possible to wage the two kinds of warfare for which Britain if unassisted was fitted, amphibious and insurrectionary.

Omnipresent and ever-conditioning this policy of diplomatic containment and the limited strategic objectives which it entailed was the question of eventual and general war with Russia, precipitate or deliberate, and the Generals' demands for some form of military preparation on a scale and of a character to undertake large-scale offensive operations against Russia. Such demands were not always easy to reconcile with the diplomatic character of military demonstrations, and Disraeli and Lytton were often unduly

criticized by exhuberant Commanders-in-Chief and wilful diplomatists for undertaking what appeared to be in the context of general war nothing more than half measures, diplomatically unrewarding and militarily inadequate. It may have been said of Disraeli, as it was of Lytton, that he was "penetrated" with "the diplomatic instinct," preferring "finesse to simple play, and deeming the outside world too rustic to suspect his game," that "his doings often savoured of foreign parts and melodramatic puffery."[4] But while such a charge may have been true in a personal sense, it did little justice to the clear grasp Disraeli and Lytton had of the strategic realities of the British-Indian military position, or to the strategic acumen of their most trusted professional advisors, Colonels Home and Colley respectively. Any assessment of Britain's military policy therefore must be not only confined to judging the efficacy of military measures from the standpoint of general war, but from their immediate ameliorative effect upon a state of apprehended war.

Additional factors peculiar to a state of crisis further circumscribed the rapidity and effectiveness of military demonstrations in support of diplomatic representations: the state of international law which made no allowance for the legality of actions taken in an atmosphere of international relations which was neither war nor peace; the emancipation of public opinion through increasing literacy, intrepid correspondents and the telegraph which

4. Lyall to his mother, 24 May, 12 and 26 June, 27 December 1877, Lyall Papers (uncatalogued); Mackenzie to Northbrook, 27 April 1880; Daly to Northbrook, 28 April 1880, Northbrook Papers, I.O.MSS.Eur.C.144/13-15.

had introduced a new force into politics whose dimensions could not be easily guaged, nor its potential power and influence accurately assessed with certainty; the cumbersomeness and rigidity of parliamentary procedure which would sanction no supplies for hypothetical cases of war; the labyrinthine formality of conventional diplomatic channels and practices; and finally, the reactions of neutrals or potential allies.

Furthermore, in the absence of an adequate intelligence system and central organization for the conduct of war, the differences of viewpoint that went into the making of military policy were legion: there were conflicts of opinion within the cabinet, within the War Office, India Office and Admiralty, within the Supreme and Home Councils; between the Indian Secretary, the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief in India; between the Foreign Office, their Ambassadors and Military Attaches. Policy was therefore often inept, confused and belated in execution. At no time could the Governments of either Britain or India act confidently in the knowledge of Russian intentions, or on the reliability of their protestations. The fog of war was much thickened by the frictions of Whitehall and the subtleties of diplomacy; at no time did the known variables of policy exceed the unknown, and when they approached an equation, the corresponding fear of precipitating war as often as not acted as a brake upon its rapid implementation.

The very complexity of the Russian crisis and the difficulty of arriving at prompt and viable policies was symptomatic of the whole complexion of change that had taken place since the Crimean War in international, military

and imperial affairs. Britain's handling of the crisis displayed all the characteristics and limitations of this transitional stage in British military and Indian frontier policy: it inaugurated the whole process by which the 'defence of India' question came at last to be scientifically examined. It is the intention of this thesis to discuss the genesis of this scientific approach to the defence of India - an approach introduced by Disraeli into the language of imperial diplomacy with an unfortunate phrase that was no histrionic or jingoistic catchword - by looking at the Russian crisis and some of the implications - political, strategical and organizational - that were involved in the making of a British defence policy.

ii. The Nature of the Threat.

Reduced to its simplest terms, the struggle for the political ascendancy in European Turkey, Asia Minor and Central Asia was between a static and defensive power compelled to operate on exterior lines with amphibious or irregular forces apprehensively watching an aggressive and moving one able to act along interior lines with forces of a continental or insurrectionary character. Although Diebitsch's and Paskewich's campaigns of 1828 and 1829, the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, and the Crimean War had all been recognized as manifestations of Russia's legitimate but objectionable ambition to secure a warm-water point d'appui in the Mediterranean, so long as the British position in India remained secure, and her sea communications to it remained unassailable around the Cape; so long as the

conjectured canal between Suez and Port Said remained unopened; so long as Britain's naval supremacy or numerical superiority in sail remained predominant in the Mediterranean, and its range and freedom of action was not curtailed by the amount of coal it could carry or procure, the implications for the defence of India of Russia's military occupation of Constantinople or her naval presence in the Mediterranean did not appear serious or practicable. Similarly, although Russian dominance at Tehran, the first Russian contact with Afghanistan and Perovsky's expedition to Khiva had in their time variously disturbed the equanimity of Sir John MacNiell and the Duke of Wellington,[5] prepared the psychological conditions if not the strategical justification for Aukland's War and the Urckhartian school of Russophobia,[6] and provoked the production of plans, official and otherwise, by Longworth and Bell, Northbrook and Rawlinson for the invasion of Central Asia from India and the raising of insurrection in Caucasia,[7] the danger to India of actual invasion from the

5. Major-General Sir Henry Rawlinson, England and Russia in the East, London, Murray, 1875; B.H.Sumner, Russia and the Balkans, 1870-1880, Oxford, Clarendon, 1937, pp.35-56; W.E.D.Allen, and P.Muratoff, Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border 1828-1921, Cambridge, C.U.P., 1953, pp.23-46; H.T.Cheshire, "The Expansion of Imperial Russia to the Indian Border," SR, XIII, 1934-5, p.96; A.P.Thornton, "The Reopening of the Central Asian Question, 1864-9," History, XLI, 1956, p.122.

6. J.H.Gleason, The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain, Harvard, H.U.P., 1950.

7. Rawlinson, Russia and England, p.376; Allen and Muratoff, Caucasian Battlefields, p.46; Northbrook to Argyll, 2 April 1872, Northbrook Papers, I.O.MSS.Eur.C.144/9; see also Argyll Papers, India Office Microfilms.

unreformed armies of Russia penetrating unexplored and legendary deserts, "the snowstorms of the Hindoo Koo, the rushing avalanches of Caubal, or the tornadoes of the Punjaub," in spite of the classical examples of Hannibal, Alexander or Nadir Shah, does not seem to have been taken seriously by military theorists and statesmen, especially after the failure of Perovsky's expedition or before the process of annexation in Sind and Punjab had been completed.[8] "When the school teacher shall have traversed the plains of Tartary," wrote Colonel Mitchell in 1838, "when the great Chan shall have conned his Adam Smith, and when McAdam shall have stretched his polypus arms across the Hindoo Koo - then, and not till then, we may seriously talk of an overland invasion of India."

By 1876, these conditions and more had been fulfilled; and the strategical situation had been startlingly transformed. The effect of the failure of Russia's Crimean policy had been to alter the complexion of Russian foreign policy in two main distinctive but not wholly unrelated directions that together in association with other extraneous developments had a decisive significance for Indian defence. On the one hand Russia's military failure in the Crimea, together with the examples of the blood and iron unification of Italy and Germany provided ample psychological justification for the revival of a powerful and militant brand of Pan-Slavism whose most systematic theoretical exposition had been provided in Danilevsky's

8. Cf. Lt.-Colonel J.Mitchell, Thoughts on Tactics: together with an enquiry into the Power and Position of Russia, London, Longmans, 1938, pp.305-51. Hamley makes no mention of Indian defence in his Operations of War; Rawlinson, Russia and England, pp.1-65.

Russia and Europe (published in 1869), subsequently styled the "Bible of pan-slavism."[9] But the work that attracted the War Office and the Cabinet[10] as summing up the quintessence of the military implications of Pan-Slavism was Fadeef's brief polemical Opinion on the Eastern Question. Both Danilevsky and Fadeef enunciated without qualification the doctrine that force is the sole final arbiter in international affairs and that war on a great scale was the inevitable prerequisite for any great nation with a mission to fulfill. In a future war against Turkey it would be imperative to forestall Western sea-power (which alone could intercept Russian movements along the Black Sea littoral) before it reached the Bosphorus: and this could best be done by negociating beforehand for Austria's neutrality or crushing her by force (thereby removing the fatal flank threat), by inciting insurrection in Bosnia and Servia to draw off Turkish forces and then, after masking the Danubian and Bulgarian fortresses with 100,000 troops, striking rapidly southwards with another 150,000 to reach Constantinople in six weeks. Ignatiev, the Russian ambassador at Constantinople from 1864 to 1874, associated himself with these ideas and worked assiduously upon Russian foreign policy in such a manner as to bring

9. The account of Pan-Slavism is taken mainly from M.B. Petrovich, The Emergence of Russian PanSlavism, 1856-1870, New York, Columbia U.P., 1956; H.Kohn, Pan Slavism: its History and Ideology, Notre Dame, Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1953; Sumner, Russia and Balkans, pp.56-80.

10. WO Confdl Paper 0621, "The Steps which Russia would take should she determine to occupy the Principalities in the Spring," Captain F.C.H.Clarke, August 1876, WOP, W22; Disraeli to Derby, confdl, 21 October 1876, bound vol., 'Letters from Lord Beaconsfield,' Derby Papers.

about a revision of the Treaty of Paris, command of Constantinople and the Straits, and Slavic hegemony in the Balkans. "I undertook negociations with all Slavic peoples, preparing them for independence," wrote Ignatiev in his memoirs, "The work of undermining the Treaty of Paris and of countering western and all foreign influences on the Bosphorus, especially those of Turkey itself and of Austro-Hungary, had to be continued until the development of Russia's strength and until propitious events in Europe would permit us to effect an independent solution of the Eastern Question in the Russian sense, that is, by forming territories of co-racialists and co-religionists bound to Russia by indissoluble bonds, while leaving the Straits to our disposition."[11] The publication of Danilevsky's and Fadeef's works in 1869, the tearing up of the Black Sea clauses of the Paris Treaty and the creation of a Russian squadron on the Black Sea in 1871,[12] Chernaeff's association with the insurrections of Bosnia and Servia,[13] and Ignatiev's intrigues,[14] taken together with the

11. I.V.Ignatiev, Memoirs, p.56 cited in Petrovich, PanSlavism, pp.474-5.

12. "Secret memorandum on War with Russia," Capt. J.W.Hozier, October 1870, WO 132/120; "Memorandum by Simmons to Cardwell 'on certain papers given to him for perusal by Mr. Cardwell'," 15 December 1870, Simmons Papers, FO 538/2.

13. H.Sutherland Edwards, Sir William White, For Six Years Ambassador at Constantinople: His Life and Correspondence, London, Murray, 1902, pp.81-94.

14. B.H.Sumner, "Ignatiev at Constantinople, 1864-74," SR, XI, 1933, pp.341-53, 556-71.

construction of strategic railways towards the Pruth, the creation of a South Russian Military Circle in Bessarabia, the character of Russian military reforms and Vincent's disclosures of the military weaknesses of Turkey[15] - all seemed cumulative and incontrovertible evidence that once Austria and Prussia were squared, the invasion of Turkey and the occupation of Constantinople was only a matter of convenience. "The fatal result," wrote MacDougall, "would be, that a commanding position would be attained by Russia from which she could securely plan, and at her own time and option execute, an assault upon our Eastern communications, whether by the invasion of Egypt, or a harassing naval warfare in the Mediterranean. We should have to secure the defence of Egypt; we should have to double the expenditure of our navy; and even then we should have to deal with an enemy who would have a secure base of operations, and an excellent harbour of refuge."[16]

In British eyes, the strategical importance of Constantinople had been immeasurably enhanced since the earlier Near Eastern crisis of 1853-6 by two main developments: the Indian Mutiny and the opening of the Suez Canal.

15. C.E.H.Vincent to Northbrook, October 1875, Northbrook Papers, I.O.MSS.Eur.C.144/14; Vincent, "The Military Geography of European Turkey," J.R.U.S.I., XXI, 1878, pp.248-59; "The Turkish Military Forces and the Military Aspects of the Eastern Question," J.R.U.S.I., XIX, 1876, pp.346-59; "The Armed Strength of Europe," ibid, pp.1-53; "A Report on the Offensive and Defensive Condition of the Ottoman Empire: presented to the Director of the Intelligence Department of Her Majesty's War Office," C.E.H.Vincent, Constantinople, October 1875, WO/106/1.

16. P.L.MacDougall, "Russia at Constantinople," Blackwoods, CXX, December 1876, pp.763-75.

In Lytton's opinion, the Mutiny had made the British-Indian Empire inescapably a Mohammedan power, susceptible to all the shades and shifts of Moslem sentiment. The course of Britain's Eastern policy "and its freedom from all subserviency to Russia" would determine whether that sentiment was "to be an immense security, or an immense danger to us." Failure to prevent the Russians occupying (and therefore desecrating) the citadel of Mohammedanism therefore would have disastrous consequences for India:

> 1st. It would identify us with a public outrage on the feelings of all Mahommedan subjects - the greatest and bitterest outrage those feelings could receive; 2ndly, their resentment would be insensibly, but infallibly shared and reflected by our Hindoos, the majority of whom are, more or less, Mahammedenised, and would certainly be carried along by any vehement current of Mohameden antagonism to British rule; 3rdly, it would thus render us perilously, and yet permanently, dependant on the power of the sword for the maintainance of our dominion over an alien population enormously outnumbering us; 4thly, it would drive the Turks into Arabia, and there we should find them most inconvenient & dangerous neighbours....[17]

As already noted, this concern for the state of Moslem feeling in India was founded upon an exaggerated miscalculation of the prevalence and strength of the Sultan-Caliph's influence throughout Central Asia; but it was a factor of incalculable strategic consequence that the Indian Government could not risk offending.

The opening of the Suez Canal had similarly introduced more strategic liabilities than assets into Britain's relative military position in the East: it at once drew

17. Lytton to Salisbury, 9 July 1877, Lytton Papers, I.O.MSS. Eur.E.218/518/2; see also Maj.-General H.Essame, "The Anatomy of Mutiny," Army Quarterly and Defence Journal, LXXXII, April to July 1961, pp.189-200.

the distant but secure cordon of British communications looped around the Cape tightly against the periphery of Eurasia at a moment when that periphery was most susceptible to Russian influence and control, and placed the Mediterranean naval powers, of whom Russia was now potentially one, in a position relatively much closer than Britain to India. Since Malta was from four to six days' steam from the Straits and Egypt and since the extension of naval radius of action beyond these outer limits, embracing the possibility of extended maritime operations in the Black Sea, was dependent upon the availability of supplementary coal supplies which unfortunately lay in vulnerable Turkish territory, it made necessary the acquisition of some coaling and refitting station, some war anchorage which might also serve as a place d'armes for the collection of an expeditionary force, towards the eastern end of the Mediterranean;[18] and made the eventual control of the Suez Canal (by negociation, purchase or treaty) and the occupation of Egypt, actual or vicarious, an imminent necessity and a mere matter of time. Until these could be accomplished however (and this would be a matter of diplomacy), the physical defence of Constantinople and the Straits or the expressed determination to do so seemed the only military means of checking Russian aggression in Turkey, or throwing upon her the responsibility for accelerating a general European war. To this extent, the Mutiny and the Canal combined to invest

18. Memorandum by P.L.MacDougall on the Defence of Egypt, 3 March 1876, "Army, Resources, Topography of Egypt," India Military Proceedings, vol.541, nos.347 and 348; see also copy in Secretary of State's Papers, 1878, War Office Library; P.L.MacDougall, "The Khedive's Egypt and our Route to India," Blackwoods, CXXII, October 1877, pp.477-90.

Constantinople with a politico-religious importance that, as will be seen later, from a purely military or strategic standpoint it did not intrinsically possess. Theoretically speaking, a military occupation of or naval demonstration before Constantinople, or both combined, ensured command of the Marmara and Black Seas, and a base for regular or irregular operations along the Bulgarian or Armenian littorals; but such a strategy would presuppose many things that were not at all certain or wise; an alliance with Turkey or at least Turkish acquiescence in such a policy; the prior occupation of the Gallipoli Peninsula; the security of the Mediterranean sea-route from rival naval powers or Greek privateers and the absence of a Russian blockade of the Dardenelles or the Suez Canal; the inevitable extension of the responsibility for the defence of Turkey to the Balkans and even the Danube without which from a military viewpoint the passive defence of Constantinople along the Buyuk-Tcheckmedji line would be unrealistic; Britain's ability to muster, transport and entrench suffiently large forces in time to forestall the momentum of massive Russian armies linked by rail to immense sources of recruits and supplies; the capacity of the country surrounding Constantinople to support, in the event of the disruption of her maritime supply-lines, any British force landed in Turkey; the likelihood of outbreaks of Moslem fanaticism and intrigue in Constantinople. But if all these considerations were still matters of speculation it was clear that no British force based on Constantinople could intercept a Russian advance upon the Suez Canal, the Persian Gulf or even India from the Caucasus and Armenian highlands.

It was the image of an overland advance towards these regions, rather than Russian naval presence in the Mediterranean, that caused the most anxiety to British soldiers, statesmen and strategists prior to August 1876.

Thwarted in her Crimean policy, Russia had resumed an "aggressive, positive and determined" policy of Eastern conquest that had begun on the Steppes in 1847 and seemed designed to bring her to the very outworks of British India.[19] The capture of the legendary Schamyl and the pacification of the Caucasus put at her disposal the vast warlike resources of Circassian society, placed her in a dominant central strategic position astride the great land trade and military lines of communication between Europe and Asia and gave her a virtual political ascendency over Persia. A Prussian officer had noted that by "the conquest of Caucasia and its conversion into a secure base, Russia has placed herself in a position...to break the influence of England and mature herself for action in Europe:

> From the Caucasus her armies may now descend to the Bosphorus, the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf, or the Arabian Sea and from thence she may advantageously support her operations against India. Again in the Caucasus, she possesses a safe retreat if defeated or repulsed; and, considering the natural configuration of the region and its works of defence, the chances of a successful invasion are exceedingly small. In this well-fortified highland region the Russian Armies can always safely collect after a defeat, be reinforced, and prepare themselves for fresh operations. By reason of its extensive network of roads and roadways and its many fortified points and strongholds, the Caucasus

19. Rawlinson, "Memorandum on the Central Asian Question, 20 July 1868," I.O.Political and Secret Records, Miscellaneous, C14; cf. Russia and England, pp.271-301.

offers great facilities for the offensive, both against Turkish Armenia and Central Asia. From the Caucasus Russia may all but scot-free pursue her traditional policy of conquest towards west and south.[20]

The British-controlled Indo-European telegraph in Persia, the projected Tigris-Euphrates Valley Railway, the Persian Gulf and the Suez Canal all now seemed suddenly vulnerable to Russian interception by land:

All the great battles which have decided the Empire of the East - from Cyrus and Croesus to Alexander the Great, Omar, Bajazit and Tamerlane - have been fought in the region between the Black Sea and the Persian Gulf, [wrote a correspondent in Blackwoods.] England and Russia are now the two great rivals for Eastern dominion: and if Russia continues to advance, it is in South-West Asia that the decisive contest will have to be fought. The fate of India will be decided in the Valley of the Euphrates....

[But, he continued,] it is a region where the power of England can operate with fullest effect,- literally, with far more effect than in any other part of the globe. It is accessible by our fleets alike on east, west and south - from the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. Bounded on the east by the Tigris, on the west by the Levant, and perfectly secure on the south, its northern frontier where alone attack may come - covered by mountains and deserts - presents only a narrow front actually assailable. This region also lies in the very centre of the widespread Empire of England - between India and Australasia on the one hand

20. "Memorandum by Sir Arthur Kemball on Turkish means of Defence against Russia," 26 April 1877, encl. Layard to Derby, no.347, confdl, 26 April 1877, FO 78/2570; Layard to Derby, no.546, most confdl, 30 May 1877, FO 78/2571. Cf. Layard Papers, Add.MSS.39144; Major Orest Ritter von Bischoff, "The Caucasus and its significance to Russia with regard to her European and Asian Relations," Proceedings of the United Service Institute of India, vol.9, no.42, 1880, pp.31-55; 'Memorandum to consider the measures which should be adopted in India in the event of England joining Turkey in the war against Russia,' Major F.S.Roberts, secret, 4 June 1877, Notes on the Central Asian Question and the Coast and Frontier Defence of India, War Office, 1902, Roberts Papers.

and England and our Canadian Dominion on the other. It is readily defensible by our Indian Army.[21]

In spite of the War Office - Admiralty Commission's favourable endorsement of the strategical importance of the Suez Canal,[22] and Childers' repeated insistence during the Franco-Prussian War that its control (by treaty or purchase) for war purposes was a matter "of immediate and vital concern," Gladstone and Granville took no action.[23] It was the Russian occupation of Khiva and Khokand which prompted the strengthening of Aden and the Persian Gulf,[24] Disraeli's purchase of the Khedive's shares and the Cave Mission, and MacDougall's reconnaissance and plan for the defence of Egypt and the Suez Canal ("a bridge of passage to India...and a bridle on Constantinople and the Levant") from invasion from the north-east.[25] While refusing to speculate as to Britain's Mediterranean policy in the event of war, Disraeli justified these actions to the House of Commons by pointing out that "England is a Mediterranean

21. "New Routes to India," Blackwoods, CXXII, October 1878, pp.485-498.

22. "Report on the Maritime Canal connecting the Mediterranean at Port Said with the Red Sea at Suez," Captain Richards, R.N., and Lt.-Colonel A.Clarke, R.E., Accounts and Papers, XLIV, 1870, Cmd.42; see also J.Marlowe, The History of the Suez Canal, London, Cresset, 1964.

23. Childers to Granville, 25 November 1870, cited in Lt.-Colonel S.Childers, The Life and Correspondence of the Rt.Hon. Hugh C.E.Childers, London, Murray, 1902, 2 vols., I, p.247.

24. "Memorandum on the Importance of Aden," Lord Napier, 13 January 1875, encl. in Roberts to Burne, 28 January 1875, "Fortifications to be maintained in the Bengal Presidency," IMP, vol.958, no.368.

25. MacDougall, op.cit.

Power...a great Mediterranean Power who...holds strongholds on those waters which she will never relinquish....Looking to the fact that we possess a great chain of fortresses extending almost from the metropolis to India, I regard the Suez Canal as a means of communication which we ought to prize."[26]

In Central Asia, the building of the Caspian fleet and the creation of a Trans-Caspian Military District under Lomakin at Krasnovodsk as a base for punitive expeditions against the Tekke-Turkomans that were no more than undisguised reconnaissances along the rim of northern Persia towards Merv and Herat, the acknowledged 'keys' to India; the reduction of Tashkent, fabled Samarkand, and the vast but vaguely defined Khanates of Bokhara, Khiva and Khokand; the ascendancy of Russian influence at the Courts of Tehran and Cabul; all seemed elements of Romanoffski's plan to unite the eastern with the western sphere of operation thereby at once sealing the traditional avenues of British military intervention (as lately suggested by Rawlinson, Simmons and Hozier)[27] and making possible the strategical and material conditions for that invasion of India derided earlier by Mitchell. "Anyone who traces the movements of Russia towards India on the map of Asia," wrote Rawlinson as early as 1868, "cannot fail to be struck with the resemblance which these movements bear to the operations of

26. The Times, 9 February 1876.

27. "Secret memorandum on War with Russia," Capt. J.W.Hozier, October 1870, WO 132/120; "Memorandum by Simmons to Cardwell 'on certain papers given to him for perusal by Mr. Cardwell'," 15 December 1870, Simmons Papers, FO 538/2.

an Army opening parallels against a beleaguered fortress."[28] "For the first time since Alexander the Great the West was encamped on the Oxus and the Jaxartes," writes Professor Sumner, "But to the British the more important fact was that for the first time since Dupleix or Napoleon their ascendancy in southern Asia was in danger of being challenged by another European power."[29]

The implications of all these threats were made dramatically real by the revolution in strategic rail and sea communications and scientific exploration, by the loosely controlled and overwhelmingly military complexion of Russian imperial administration and by the nature of Milyutin's military reforms. Exploration, communications and conquest became mutually perpetuating activities; by 1877, the web of Russian railways had been spun to Sebastopol, Nicolaeff, Odessa, Kishinev and the Pruth where, by the adoption of telescopic axles, it could be linked to the Roumanian narrow-guage system, running parallel to the Danube from Braila through Bucharest to Krajova; by 1888, Merv, Samarkand and Tashkent were in direct rail and sea communication via Tiflis and Batoum with St. Petersburg and could draw upon the full weight of Russia's Caucasian and European military resources. In Europe, approaches to Constantinople, the probable theatre of operations in Northern Bulgaria and the Balkan Passes were being systematically scrutinized and reported upon;[30] in Central Asia, routes to India that might support an expeditionary force were

28. Rawlinson, Memorandum on the Central Asian Question.

29. Sumner, Russia and Balkans, p.39.

30. Ibid, p.217.

being continually reconnoitred and maps as fast redrawn to Russia's advantage.[31] The British inveighed especially against machinations of slavophile Russian generals such as Chernaeff in the insurgent Balkan provinces and the stream of Russian volunteers that the Russian Foreign Office seemed disinclined to arrest and even quietly to encourage; they objected bitterly against the independence of the Russian generals in Central Asia and their habit of paying no attention to the instructions, or at any rate the professions, of St. Petersburg. But in spite of repeated mollifying formulae, of the most definite promises that positive instructions had been issued against any further forward movement, each year marked another expedition, another advance.[32]

Further aggravating the whole question of the feasibility and techniques of invasion was the character and direction of Milyutin's reforms ably reported to the War Office by Colonel F.A.Wellesley, the British military attache at St. Petersburg.[33] The mismanagement and siege-like character of the Crimean adventure had resulted in

31. C.Marvin, The Russian Advance towards India, London, 1882, pp.191-2. Between 1854 and 1881, 319 Russian explorers visited Central Asia. Capt. T.H.Holdich, "Between Russia and India," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, XXIV, 1880, pp.522-34.

32. Sumner, Russia and Balkans, p.47.

33. Wellesley to Derby, 1 September 1871, 21 February 1872, 'Letter-books of Col. Fred. Wellesley', Cowley Papers, FO 519/124. Cf. also Col. the Hon. F.A.Wellesley, With the Russians in War and Peace: Recollections of a Military Attache, London, Nash, 1905; Col. the Hon. Frederick Wellesley, (ed. Sir Victor Wellesley) Recollections of a Soldier Diplomat, London, Hutchinson, [1932?].

the temporary eclipse of such engineer commanders as Todleben, the rise of the neo-Suvorov school whose champions were Gourko, Dragomiroff and Scoboleff the Younger, and whose tactical bible was the Art of Victory; and, especially after the examples of the American Civil and Franco-Prussian Wars, the implementation of a series of organizational reforms designed to inject 'mobility, speed and shock' into the Russian armies.[34] A reconstructed General Staff, localised Military Circles regrouped in conformity with a fresh mobilisation scheme, the creation of two key circles in Bessarabia and Transcaspia, the construction of a network or strategic railways - all gave much latitude to and tested the initiative of subordinate commanders; but from the point of view of Indian defence the most significant emphasis lay in the reliance upon light or irregular cavalry[35] and the systematic application of the techniques of insurrectionary warfare recently displayed in Bosnia and Servia.[36] Only by these combined means, which ensured Russian mobility and Turkish dissipation of force, could Russia hope to forestall western

34. Lt.Colonel S.Andolenko, "The Imperial Heritage," B.H. Liddell Hart (ed.), The Red Army, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1956, pp.13-24.

35. Col. Epauchin, Operations of General Gourko's Advance Guard in 1877 (trans. by H.Havelock, vol.7, Wolseley Series), London, Kegan Paul, 1900, pp.12-13; cf. G.T. Denison, History of Cavalry, London, MacMillan, 1878.

36. Rawlinson, Memorandum; H.B.Frere, "Letter to Sir John Kaye, 12 June 1874," Roberts Papers; Lytton to Salisbury, 28 May 1877, Lytton Papers, I.O.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/2; cf. also Salisbury Papers, I.O.L.microfilms, or Christ Church College, Oxford; R.H.Davies to Northbrook, 25 July 1877, Northbrook Papers, I.O.MSS.Eur.C.144/7.

sea-power on the Bosphorus and, by occupying the seat of Mahommedanism, send a thrill of discontent throughout occupied India. In Persia, "the very cornerstone of Indian defence," the "key to the whole position of affairs in the East," what Britain had especially to guard against was Russian domination "by means of moral and political pressure, which would enable her to use Persia as a lever against contiguous nationalities, against the Turks on the one side; against the Turcomans and Afghans on the other."[37] But in Central Asia, these means also suggested a strategy of indirect approach. Here lay the root of the British fears of a Russian threat to India. Actual invasion even by a band of Cossacks might not prove an imminent possibility; though as to this, as will be seen later, the experts were divided. But the danger of Russian ascendancy among the Afghans, of frontier raids on the North-West frontier, of sparks being thrown into the combustible material of northern India, of some Afghan attack perhaps stiffened by Russian detachments, arms and money and followed by a penetration into the plains of Punjab and a widespread revolt - the danger of ignition or explosion, rather than of direct invasion by Russia: this was the core of British apprehensions, the nub of the problem that was to confront

37. Rawlinson, Memorandum; Russia and England, pp.136-7; Wolseley, Blackwoods, pp.427-46. "In the attempt to conduct the government of this world there are now elements to be considered, which our predecessors had not to deal with," declared Disraeli, "we have now to deal not merely with Emperors, with Princes, and with Ministers; there are the Secret Societies, an element which we must take into account and which at the last moment may baffle all our arrangements - societies which have regular agents everywhere, which countenance assassination, and which if necessary could produce a massacre." Aylesbury speech, Times, 20 September 1876.

Lytton and Colley, the crucial justification of the Afghan War.

iii. The Foundations of British Military Policy.

If the nature of the threat seemed clear, the chances of arriving at an effective retaliatory war policy, based upon the four strategic considerations outlined earlier, were decidedly gloomy. Let us first look at the state of political influence. Contemporaneously with this aggressive Russian forward policy, and subsequent to the disasters, mismanagement and repercussions of the first Afghan, Crimean, Persian wars and Indian Mutiny, Britain's Eastern policy had been characterised by a deliberate withdrawal from the internal and external affairs of Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan.

In Turkey, the legendary influence of the Great Elcho had been largely supplanted by the intrigues of Ignatiev; the tradition of close military cooperation and liaison established by Simmons and Fenwick Williams, though to some degree belatedly revived by Valentine Baker, had been allowed to lapse, and the Turkish armies were advised, trained and disciplined by French and Prussian officers. Only the Turkish Navy and its Staff College had maintained its British connection.

The course of Indian policy under the Viceroyalties of Lawrence, Mayo and Northbrook had been characterised by an emphasis upon internal stability, military consolidation, and a reluctance to engage in trans-frontier diplomacy to such an exclusive degree that it was labelled by a rival school 'masterly inactivity,' an opprobrium as disreputable

and unfortunate as 'appeasement' was to a later generation. "Our wisest course," commented Sir John Lawrence upon an alarmist memorandum, "is not to attempt much beyond our frontier, but to consolidate our power in India, to do all we can to improve our administration, and to reconcile the people to our rule."[38] But the withdrawal of the Political Agents, the active discouragement or disavowal of military exploration, the absence of Indian military attaches at St. Petersburg, Tehran or Cabul, and Northbrook's refusal to sign a defensive treaty with Shere Ali carried their own corollary; the eventual estrangement of Afghanistan and the forfeiture of that protective influence and intelligence without which offensive military operations become impracticable.

In Persia, Britain's "do-nothing" policy of "excessive caution and perverse economy," manifested by the demotion of the Embassy to legation status, had resulted in the forfeiture of British military influence to French and Prussian control.[39] The suzereignty of Herat remained a troublesome issue; and the Seistan Arbitration only served to alienate Afghan feeling while strengthening Persia's position for intrigue. Even when the Persian Government recognized that Russia was "the only power whose aggressive policy constituted a material danger," and began, through the Reuter Concession and the Shah's visit to England, to encourage firmer British support, the Foreign and India

38. "Memorandum by Sir John Lawrence, 23 November 1868," on Rawlinson's Memorandum, I.O.Political and Secret Records, C14.

39. The following paragraph is based mainly on Rawlinson, Russia and England; quotation from p.297-8.

Offices rejected outright Rawlinson's suggestions to "turn the tables on Russia by converting Persia into a means of defence, rather than of offence, to India." Rawlinson's proposals had been fivefold: to form an experimental Persian contingent of 10,000 men, raised, armed, fed, paid, clothed, disciplined and commanded by British officers;" to encourage the creation of a Persian naval squadron based in the Persian Gulf; to induce Persian nobles to educate their sons in London rather than in Paris; to invest heavily in Persian banks, railways and mines; and finally, to transfer Persian affairs from the Foreign Office to the India Office:

> It is the advance of Russia towards India, and her demonstrations against Cabul and Herat, which seem now to require our more active interference at Teheran. Every measure of defence, referring either to Persia or Afghanistan, must be organised in India and executed from India. If troops were required, they would be supplied from Peshawer or Sinde. Officers for the Shah's forces would be drawn from the Indian army. Bombay would furnish the naval material for the Gulf. The Persian telegraph is an Indian establishment. The Indian revenues contribute a sum of £12,000 per annum towards the expenses of the Persian mission. There is no single element, indeed, of European diplomacy connected with Persia except the relations of that country with Turkey; and even these relations, referring almost exclusively to frontier grievances, come more naturally under the jurisdiction of Baghdad, or of Erzeroum, than of Constantinople. It may further be questioned whether the traditions and practice of the Foreign Office, admirably adapted as they are to European diplomacy, are fitted to deal with the peculiarities of Eastern character. Teheran is an Oriental Court of the same type and temper as the Courts of Cabul, of Lahore, of Delhi, Lucknow, or Hyderabad, where the eye must be addressed rather than the reason, and where individual character is of so much more importance and effect than the forms and precedents of office. It may be doubted if the duties of the Teheran mission, recognised as a

powerful machine of Indian defence, could be carried out by an ordinary staff of Foreign Office attaches. At any rate it would be infinitely better to employ Indian Officers, accustomed to the native character, acquainted with the language, and who would look to Persian and Afghan service as their career in life instead of pining for the luxuries and leisure of Paris and Vienna.

None of these ideas and arguments however were favourably received: a British contingent would bear all the appearance of a demonstration, offensive and hostile to Russia;[40] a Persian naval squadron would become a source of embarrassment rather than of security; while the control of Persian affairs had long been a subject of Foreign Office - India Office rivalry. When in October 1874, Thomson revived Rawlinson's proposal to train the Persian army, the Ambassador in St. Petersburg wrote to the Foreign Office that such a measure would be "both impolitic and unwise," that it would arouse Russian suspicions, that it would be supporting a "broken reed," and that it might eventually "be turned against us." "It must be borne in mind," wrote Loftus, "that Persia is very weak - ill-governed - under the influence of a fanatic Priesthood - without resources & defenceless. Her population is so reduced that there are not the elements in the Country of a strong Military Power and moreover Russia from her geographical position & the facilities afforded her by land & by the Caspian of attack could reduce Persia long before any material assistance could be provided by England....I cannot therefore consider it advisable to excite the hostility of Russia against Persia by a step which will not prove in

40. Rawlinson, Russia and England, pp.301-384.

itself an efficient security for her protection."[41]

The keystone to the revival of British influence throughout the East undoubtedly lay in Persia; for Turco-Persian-Afghan frontier disputes over Baghdad and Herat meant that to incline towards one ran the risk of alienating another. Influence therefore had to be uniformly asserted or not at all; and the latter course was pursued. "In the last twenty years," wrote Salisbury, "Central Asian politics have been a game of chess in which it was necessary to sacrifice either Persia or Afghanistan in order to leave room for the other to move. But the two being under two co-ordinate authorities instead of under one, our policy has never represented the distinct choice of a single mind, but a compromise between two conflicting claims: and a fiasco has been the necessary result."[42] Wolseley agreed: "to play off Persia and Afghanistan one against the other, and, if possible both against Russia," he wrote, "has been seemingly considered by our Foreign and India Offices as the acme of diplomatic wisdom;" the time was ripe for a firmer, more decided, more consistent policy in the East.[43]

But there seemed no disposition in Whitehall to view the situation strategically as a whole, as urged by Baker, Rawlinson, Goldsmid and Wolseley, partly no doubt because of inter-departmental rivalry and partly because

41. Loftus to Derby, pte and confdl, 7 October 1874, bound volume, 'Letters of Lord Loftus,' Derby Papers.

42. Salisbury to Northcote, 14 December 1879, Iddesleigh Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50019.

43. Wolseley, Blackwoods, pp.427-46.

of sheer indifference.[44] There was no Central Asian bureau in Whitehall exclusively charged with the management of Central Asian affairs and the co-ordination of India and Foreign Office policies. No official study had been made of the nature, vigour and effectiveness or the military implications of the Pan-Islamic movement. There were no military attaches, let alone military consuls of the sort employed at Belgrade, Bucharest or Warsaw, at any of the Eastern capitals where aggressions or insurrections were likely to be spawned. Military advice, as Wolseley and Goldsmid were quick to point out, was not consulted in the formulation of Eastern policy; while the British ambassadors at the key European Courts inspired little confidence and were in Wolseley's opinion "devoid of the professional knowledge required for a just appreciation of

44. "India is still little more than a name to us, although there is no risk that the nation would not rise to guard it against attack," wrote a Times Correspondent, "The House of Commons is still culpably careless of Indian affairs, chiefly, no doubt, because strange names, history, customs, religion, and ways of thought cannot, without vigorous and sustained effort, be brought within the range of living realities." Times, 9 February 1876. "You Indian Gentlemen," wrote Mallett to Strachey, "who spend your whole time in serious work, and who take your work in earnest, never consider how very small a part of the thoughts of English statesmen is taken up with Indian affairs. This is the moral which the Imperialist School of which Lytton is so prominent an apostle, ought to lay to heart. To think of half a dozen middle-aged English Gentlemen, Smith, Jones and Robinson, whose minds are filled with electoral facts and after-dinner speeches, setting up as the rulers of distant and alien multitudes, is so supremely ridiculous that I can never understand anyone with a sense of humour, speaking of it, without his tongue in his cheek." Mallett to Strachey, pte, 26 December 1878, Strachey Papers.

the strategical bearings of this Eastern Question."[45]

The state of the Navy was equally discouraging.[46] The revolution in naval architecture, engineering and ordnance involved in the transition from sail to steam had introduced fundamental and insuperable complications into matters of naval doctrine, organization and policy. The need to reconcile the conflicting elements of speed, armour, firepower and high-seaworthiness in battle-fleet construction; the rapid rate of obsolescence and the consequent reluctance to commit huge resources irreversibly to a single untried development; the pressure to keep pace with the technological advances of rival and potentially hostile naval powers; the absence of any major naval conflict involving battle fleets to give some clear and indisputable indication of the direction of future naval development - all combined together to encourage the dissipation of national naval economies and efforts over a wide field of building experimentation in warships, necessarily operating "in fits and starts," ranging from Cowper Cole's ill-fated ocean-going turret-ship, the Captain, to circular

45. Wolseley, op.cit.; Rawlinson, op.cit.; Col. V.Baker, "The Military Geography of Central Asia," J.R.U.S.I., XVIII, May 1874, pp.454-68; Maj.-General Sir F.J. Goldsmid, "On certain roads between Turkestan and India, independent of the Oxus, or of any Oxus boundary," J.R.U.S.I., XVIII, June 1874, pp.469-88; "Military training, a means of administrative power and of political usefulness," J.R.U.S.I., XX, May 1876, pp.524-40.

46. See for example J.P.Baxter, The Introduction of the Ironclad Warship, Cambridge, Harvard U.P., 1933; B.Brodie, Sea Power in the Machine Age, Princeton, Princeton U.P., 1944.

ironclads of the 'Popoffka' class favoured by Reed. Since the introduction of the ironclad, commented the Times, "the history of the Navy has been marked by disasters and accidents, and there has been little else to record of its achievements....With the Navy, no less than with the Army, we have gone on experimenting long enough; and it is high time some definite policy were resolved upon...."[47] Engulfed in the day-to-day complexities of this technological upheaval, the Admiralty failed to produce an overall appreciation of the naval resources of the Empire for peace or war purposes: there was no general policy outlining its course of development or defining the purposes and objectives of the Navy and the type of ships it should construct. "No Minister has yet risen in Parliament," wrote the Times, "to say, without reference to existing forces, how many ships we really want, for what purpose, and of what character."[48] In Parliament and the R.U.S.I. that enthusiastic navalist Captain Bedford Pym, supported by Admirals Sir Sidney Dacres, Sir Thomas Symonds and Sir George Sartorius, waged an implacable campaign for the appointment of a Select Committee to "examine into Admiralty administration, and the actual condition of the naval and maritime resources of the Country, to ascertain how far they meet the requirements of the Empire."[49] The R.U.S.I. Prize Essays for 1876 and 1878

47. The Times, 8 February 1876.

48. Cited in Childers, Childers, p.166.

49. Hansard, 1877, CCXXXII, 3rd Series, 20 February 1876, cc.735-6, 1408; see Pym's comments on J.C.R.Colomb's lecture, "Russian Development and our Naval and Military Position in the North Pacific," J.R.U.S.I., XXI, 25 May 1877.

"on the best types of war vessels for the British Navy" and on the best means of developing "Great Britain's Maritime Power" were similarly designed to focus national attention upon this central issue.[50] A multitude of articles in the professional journals by the Colomb brothers, Sturdee, Eardly-Wilmot, Scott, Wilson, Brassey and Currie on offensive and defensive naval warfare, the role and development of the merchant marine as a naval reserve, and the strategical importance of military harbours and coaling stations reflected the confusion and uncertainties presiding over naval policy, the real weakness of Britain's naval position, and even moved the Council of the R.U.S.I. to recommend that "a national enquiry be made by the Imperial Government... as to the best places for naval and military centres and for strategic positions."[51]

Tactical and strategic thought was in a similar state of flux.[52] The present ascendancy of armour over gun-power and the misinterpreted lessons of Lissa had swung much respectable naval opinion - Sartorius and Colomb for example - to the opinion that the ram engaging in single combat, rather than the gun, would be the sole final arbiter

50. Comdr. G.H.U.Noel, "On the best types of war vessels for the British Navy," (The Naval Prize Essay, 1876), J.R.U.S.I., XX, pp.253-74; Captain P.H.Colomb, "Great Britain's Maritime Power etc....," (The Naval Prize Essay, 1878), ibid, XXII, pp.1-55.

51. Captain J.C.R.Colomb, "Russian Development and our Naval and Military Position in the North Pacific," ibid, XXI, 1877, p.707.

52. See D.M.Schurman, The Education of a Navy: the Development of British Naval Strategic Thought, 1868-1914, London, Cassell, 1965.

of future naval battles. And after the Alabama 'scare' the destruction of enemy commerce raiders rather than his battle fleet seemed the logical prime role of the Navy. There was no scientific study of naval history,[53] partly because of the unalterable liturgies of the Nelsonic creed, partly because prolonged periods at sea restricted opportunities and facilities for study, partly because there were no defeats within living memory to stimulate self-criticism, and partly because lessons drawn from the days of sail seemed of little value in the age of steam. There was no naval intelligence department, no naval war staff or staff college. In spite of the fact that British naval supremacy in the Mediterranean could in wartime be directly challenged by a hostile combination of France, Italy and Russia, there was only a single naval attache accredited to all the European Courts (the other being at Washington), and no suitably defended war anchorage or naval base closer than Malta from which to operate against Russia. While steam-power and iron now made it seem possible to force the Dardanelles with ease and impunity where previously, as in Duckworth's day, this had been much determined by wind, tide and chance,[54] the general condition of the Navy, as outlined above, seemed to suggest that it would be extremely difficult to conduct a maritime war against the periphery of Russia with much decisive effect without the alliance or co-operation of some other naval power or powers.

Paralleling disengagement in diplomacy and confusion

53. J.K.Laughton, "The Scientific Study of Naval History," J.R.U.S.I., XVIII, 1874, pp.508-27.

54. E.J.Reed in the Times, 14 March 1877,

in naval policy, since the Crimean War military policy had been manifestly marked by internal reconstruction. The greatest military problem for Britain in the 1870's was not the preparation for continental warfare but the transformation of her own Army in terms of its place within the constitution and its role in the execution of foreign and imperial policy. The reforms of the fifties and sixties under Herbert and Pakington culminating in Cardwell's administration are rightly known as "the great reforms" however much spadework had been accomplished beforehand and however much they were emasculated from the very start.[55] First and foremost, as will be seen later, the abolition of purchase shook the whole structure of military society.[56] Taken together, the reforms plunged the Army forward into a final stage of transformation that took over thirty years to run its course. They revived the struggles over civilian and military control which came to a head in 1904 and 1917, in each case as an immediate consequence of failure in war. They introduced 'politics' into the Army and split it into two opposing camps, reactionary and revolutionary,

55. The following paragraph on the Cardwell reforms has been drawn from the Cardwell, Northbrook, Gladstone and Wolseley Papers. Some recent writings include; B.Bond, Lord Cardwell's reforms: the effect of short service and localisation upon the British Army, 1868-94, unpublished M.A.thesis, University of London, 1961; B.Bond, "Edward Cardwell's Army Reforms," Army Quarterly, XXXIV, April-July 1962, pp.108-17; A.B.Erickson, "The Abolition of Purchase in the British Army," Military Affairs, vol.24, 1959, pp.65-76; A.V.Tucker, "Army and Society in England, 1870-1900: a Reassessment of the Cardwell Reforms," Journal of British Studies, vol.2, no.2, May 1963.

56. Erickson, op.cit.

in such a way that results pernicious to efficiency and esprit de corps were bound to follow. The reforms were hatched in an atmosphere of retrenchment, and on the supposition that there would be no increase in Britain's imperial commitments. They did not envisage the possibility of simultaneous involvement in more than one limited crisis, and had not taken into account the emergent and all-absorbing question of Indian defence. Indeed the great weakness of Cardwell's reforms was that they affected only one aspect of Britain's imperial military administration; and it was left to Lytton and Colley and their successors to attempt to rectify this situation. So far as they went then, the reforms attempted to alter the structure rather than the spirit of Britain's military administration, and at the outbreak of the Eastern crisis the process of transformation had only just begun.

The Crimean War had vividly shown that the British Army was no longer the finely-tuned instrument that had tramped from Lisbon to Waterloo; and the great wars of Italian and German unification only served to underscore Britain's military impotence to influence the decisive events of European history. The Abyssinian and Ashanti campaigns may have convinced some Englishmen that nothing had changed, but less partial observers could not fail to recognize that in terms of continental warfare these were local and insignificant affairs. Under Gladstone, as we have seen, foreign affairs meant masterly inactivity; and the major issues still lay at home. While Britain affected the Continent to a comparatively small extent, the influence of Europe on Britain in matters of military organization and

tactics was all-important and the borrowing from Prussia was both direct and deliberate in the case of all the reforms with the one exception of the abolition of purchase. Yet the reforms, necessary as they appeared to be, created more problems than they solved.

All democracies experience at one time or another a struggle between soldiers and statesmen over the degree of control that each should exercise in the formulation of military policy and the management of the affairs of the Army. But in the constitutional monarchy of Victorian England, the struggle was additionally complicated by persistent Royal interference that was more irritating than influential, and a constitutional idiosyncrasy which allowed serving members of the forces to sit in Parliament and criticise the military policy of the administration whose instruments they were. In spite of Cardwell's efforts to concentrate the responsibility for military policy in the hands of a single War Minister answerable to Parliament, and restrict the Commander-in-Chief to the subordinate role of official adviser, the old duality between the Horse Guards and War Office was perpetrated by Royal intervention: the Queen suggested that the Duke of Cambridge be made Minister of War[57] and took a jealous interest in the affairs of the Army and the making of military policy; while the Commander-in-Chief, who was consistently ignored by Disraeli at the most critical phases of the Russian crisis and was not consulted about the acquisition of Cyprus, the Indian contingent to Malta, or Wolseley's appointments to

57. Queen Victoria to Beaconsfield, 31 March 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/B/1246.

Cyprus and Zululand, deplored in turn with some justice "the part politics was assuming in military affairs,"[58] demanded (but not always succeeded in obtaining) the right of attendance at Cabinet meetings when military policy was under discussion,[59] and even used the Mobilisation Committee, formed in 1877, to obstruct Cabinet policy.[60] There could be no doubt after the Reform Bill of 1867 that the passing of the Royal Commander-in-Chiefship, and the substitution of a General Staff - as pointed out by Hartington as early as 1880[61] - was only a matter of time; and that this progressively incongruous phenomenum was not likely anyway to survive the Queen. Nevertheless, in spite of the recommendations of the Hartington Commission (1890) and the representations of successive War Ministers that it was an obstacle to the reforms which only a completely autonomous political authority could introduce and carry, the royal command of the Army, technical though it really was, persisted until the Boer War finally discredited the concept of 'personal' command and made possible the introduction of the General Staff.

58. Chamberlain to his sister, recording an interview with the Duke of Cambridge, G.W.Forrest, Life of Field-Marshal Sir Neville Chamberlain, London, Blackwood, 1909, p.501.

59. Cambridge to Hardy, pte, 29 April 1877, 5 March 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/268,273; Cambridge to Tenterden, pte, 28 March 1879, Tenterden Papers, FO/363/1.

60. "Confidential Memorandum for Secretary of State," Duke of Cambridge, 21 July 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/268; Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 22 July 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/285.

61. Hartington to Ripon, 28 September 1881, Ripon Papers, BM.Add.MSS.43567.

At the root of the Queen's apprehensions and her anxiety to retain a strong personal affiliation with the Army was the recognition, tacit if not avowed, that abolition of purchase had undermined the ancient structure of the officer corps and made possible a new type of officer, personified by Wolseley and his Ring, whose promotion and ultimate power was independent of royal patronage to the extent that it was largely determined by political considerations and the exigencies of party politics. In the two decades following Cardwell's reforms, Britain was engaged in eight expeditions, crises and wars of a more or less limited character; and the question of military efficiency and the judicious use of military forces in support of foreign or imperial diplomacy and to bolster the image of national military power became political considerations of the greatest importance. In at least two instances, military disasters contributed to the fall of a Government. In such circumstances where military success appeared to be an essential prerequisite of domestic political stability, party politics and the objectives of the 'Young Army' school of reform and adventure, of whom Wolseley was the self-appointed leader, tended to coincide. Indeed Wolseley was a 'political' general par excellance; a willing reformer for the Liberals and a useful military adventurer for the Tories.[62] His celebrated Ring constituted de facto an operational general staff that de jure had been opposed by the Queen; and henceforward two kinds of patronage for high command in the Army emerged centred on Wolseley

62. Wolseley's Journal of the Khartoum Relief Expedition, PRO/WO/147/7.

and Marlborough House.

Much dogmatic writing, derived largely from the self-generated Wolseley legend, has dwelt upon the inordinate and misguided conservatism and reactionariness of the Royal Duke in contradistinction to the unchallengeable inherent rightness of the tendency towards reform.[63] But that is by no means the whole issue. Samuel Johnson once referred to the "intellectual vulgarity" of those who, in the warm light of historic hindsight, deride men of the past for opposing policies which were later found to be valid and wise. The Duke of Cambridge has often been condemned out of hand as unimaginative and unprogressive; but, as Wolseley himself was moved to admit, he was probably much more acutely aware of the unsettling effects of prolonged and continuous reorganisation upon the spirit of the Army than were his more optomistic and exhuberant contemporaries. The mere circumstance that one man was proved wrong in his predictions and the other right does not prove that the latter was the more discerning observer. Indeed, in view of the unpredictability of the consequences of new developments in military technology, technique and organisation, it is doubtful whether reform in itself was necessarily a desirable end so long as national military policy, and the objects for which an army is maintained,

63. Sir G.Arthur and Sir F.Maurice, Life of Lord Wolseley, London, Heineman, 1924; J.H.Lehman, All Sir Garnet: A Life of Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley, London, Cape, 1964; for an opposite view see G.St.Aubyn, The Royal George: Life of H.R.H., the Duke of Cambridge, London, Constable, 1963. The best analysis of Wolseley as a commander is to be found in Lt.-Colonel C.O.Head, The Art of Generalship: Four Exponents and One Example, Aldershot, Gale and Polden, n.d.

still remained undefined. It was not necessarily wise uncritically to adapt Prussian war organisation - which had been specifically designed with a clear and definite object in view - to the peculiarities of Britain's island position, small volunteer army and extensive imperial commitments. There was a much better case for doing so in India where the strategical and frontier conditions made such a 'Continental' military policy both practicable and desirable.

With the exceptions of Napier and Chamberlain, the Duke of Cambridge's generals - Airey, Ellice, Lysons and Horsford in England and Haines, Norman and Johnson in India - whatever ability they may individually have possessed, suffered from their association with the failures of the Afghan and Crimean Wars and the Great Mutiny; and were often the butts of Disraeli's and Lytton's derision for their pre-Crimean attitude to war, and their failure to recognise that large political objects may sometimes best be attained by small rather than large military forces. Wolseley's own acid appreciation was that "an English General under existing conditions when detailed for any military operation has to begin his campaign by fighting the Duke of Cambridge" and his Generals who "have as much genius or military talent as would fill a snipe's cranium."[64] Yet there were some engineer generals such as Simmons and Napier whose wide experience of Polish, Turkish, Russian and Afghan armies made them invaluable advisers as to the type of war likely to be waged against Russia.

64. Journal of the South African War - 1879-80, Wolseley Papers, PRO/WO/147/7.

If the Duke of Cambridge's generals were by virtue of their age, their past association with former failures and their inflexible reluctance to push Cardwell's reforms to their logical conclusion and, according to Wolseley's and Disraeli's own pragmatic criteria of generalship and command - success in the field - disqualified from assuming high command in a major European war, there was much about Wolseley and his Ring that did not inspire confidence. A critical study of Wolseley's private correspondence, campaign journals and official memoranda reveals without qualification that his belated association with the reform movement and his irregular methods to influence military policy through the Press and unsolicited memoranda were primarily and deliberately motivated by prospects of increased personal power and distinction, rather than by any self-effacing Hankey-like concern for the national military condition. Prior to 1870, Wolseley had never held an independent command. In spite of rapid promotion chiefly due to his undoubted grasp of administrative detail, his relative immaturity and his absorption in distant colonial conflicts which kept him out of the main-stream of revolutionary military thought, prevented him from appreciating the significance of the changes that were taking place in the very nature of war as manifested in America and Europe, or from developing any careful exposition of national military policy into which he could fit some broad scheme of reform. Cardwell's reforms owed much to Northbrook, Storks, Thompson, Knox, MacDougall and Adye and to a host of lesser lights such as Baring, Home and Biddulph: Wolseley's contribution was largely fortuitous and unimportant.

The later small wars and expeditions in which he held the chief command, though lacking nothing in his conduct of them, were yet not sufficiently important or exacting to distinguish him as a great commander, or to contribute very materially to his country's safety or pre-eminence. As a strategist Wolseley suffered from a dangerous fixation: the bloodless success of the Red River Expedition provided him with a formula for victory that he subsequently injected into many official memoranda concerning expeditions in Africa and Central Asia, and which in the case of the Gordon Relief Expedition turned out to be a fatal obsession. He displayed similar lapses in strategic judgement over the defence of the North-West frontier and the importance of Cyprus; and until his appointment as Chief-of-Staff designate to Napier in 1878 was never consulted by Disraeli and his War Minister on matters of strategy or military policy. Wolseley wrote no major work on military history, theory or biography, nor developed, as he might well have done, any doctrines on amphibious or irregular warfare. His earliest work, a Narrative of the China War, published when he was but twenty-seven and a financial failure, displayed all the limitations and weaknesses, the ordinariness of mind, the clumsiness of style and intellect, the absence of rigorous analysis and the inability to push an argument to its logical conclusion, that was to become characteristic of much of his later writing, especially of his truncated lives of Marlborough, Napoleon and himself.[65] Contrary to the legend propogated

65. Wolseley Papers, PRO/WO/147/1; Wolseley to R.Wolseley, 16 August 1862, Wolseley Family Papers; G.J.Wolseley, Narrative of the War with China in 1860, London, Longmans, 1862.

largely by himself and ratified by his biographers,[66] that, given the opportunity, Wolseley would have shown himself one of the great Captains of history, the conclusion clearly emerges that, as Colonel Stacey has recently said of Wolfe,[67] Wolseley had a definite command 'ceiling,' and was ill-equipped in intellect and character to command large armies under the new conditions of continental warfare.

It is true that Wolseley's experience of border and tribal warfare, his able handling of deep penetrative expeditions, his appreciation of the value of sea-power and of the essential weakness of Britain's partially-reformed military system, coupled with a prestige that after Ashanti rivalled Napier's, made him a competitive choice for command in the offensive peripheral kind of amphibious warfare that would be the opening feature of any general war with Russia. But his faulty strategic judgement, his tendency toward indiscretion, his predilection for bold and striking measures, his disdain for politicians and his autocratic concept of the civil-military relationship in the prosecution of war made him an unsafe adviser on matters of military policy during a state of crisis. As we shall see, his hopes of the chief command were blocked at every turn by Simmons and Napier; his ambitious inveigling to obtain the Indian command was effectively (and permanently) thwarted by the Queen and the Duke of Cambridge, and throughout the Eastern crisis Wolseley had to be content

66. Arthur, Life, p.341; Lehman, Life, p.391.

67. C.P.Stacey, Quebec, 1759; The Siege and the Battle, Toronto, MacMillan, 1959.

with pseudo-political appointments to Natal in 1875, Cyprus in 1878 and Zululand in 1879.

Central to the conflict between Wolseley and the Duke of Cambridge and pivotal to the question of the state of the high command was the constitution and role of the much-vaunted 'Ashanti Ring' - a chosen band of brother officers, most of whom were demonstrably Wolseley's intellectual superiors, selected on the basis of their special complementary qualifications to form an improvised general staff. Buller, Wood and Butler had proved able subordinate commanders; Brackenbury became one of the foremost military administrators of the day; while Home and Colley, as will be seen later, as organisers and planners for war possessed intellectual qualities of a rare order. Performing as a composite whole, wrote Archibald Forbes,[68] they constituted "an engine effectively adapted to a wide range of uses...a weapon of extraordinary and diverse force;" but in a corporate sense they had never existed as a reforming body, and it is open to question whether some of them did not attain positions beyond their capacity, and whether other and better men could not have been produced by some other system than that of a selected band earning all the current military distinction. Whatever the individual merits of the favoured circle, the system was undoubtedly pernicious; and the Duke of Cambridge rightly and unceasingly complained of it. During the 1870's and 1880's, as this structure of command came to characterise most of Wolseley's expeditions, the legendary Ring became so

68. A.Forbes, Souvenirs of Some Continents, London, MacMillan, 1885, pp.175-7.

entrenched in the popular imagination that Wolseley found it increasingly difficult, because publicly inconvenient, to employ other men. Wolseley, in fact, became captive to a myth. In recognition of their undoubted abilities and past record of loyalty, Wolseley felt bound to consider his colleagues exclusively for all major field and staff appointments, thereby incurring the displeasure and increasingly implacable opposition of the Commander-in-Chief and those other senior officers who had no hope of belonging to the charmed circle. The Soldier's Pocket-Book became a sacred catechism which had only to be intoned in incantation in Wolseley's presence to secure admission to the fabled fold.[69] But, writes Colonel Head:

> The retention of all military adventure in the hands of a small selected band was demoralising to the rest of the Army. All other officers, except a few of the most hopeful and enterprising, felt their chance of seeing active service, and earning reward and accelerated promotion, to be hopeless; and, consequently, took little pains to fit themselves for the serious duties of their profession. Few then dreamt of great wars that would demand the whole energy and resources of the nation; and only those on, or hoping to get on, the special-service list took any trouble to study war, and consider the problems which the ever-changing armament and conditions presented. Consequently a vast store of potential talent was lost, and many a rose wasted its fragrance on the parade ground, whilst flowers of an inferior order were blooming luxuriantly on the fields of action. And not only did the system have the result of overlooking much valuable material, and chilling professional zeal and interest, but its effect on the favoured few was not altogether advantageous from the public point of view. Their path to power was so smooth and easy that little effort was required to justify their fitness for the exalted ranks they almost all attained. A formidable row of medals was deemed a quite sufficient guarantee of military ability, and the various

69. Wolseley Papers, PRO/WO/147/7.

orders of Knighthood that rewarded them covered all deficiencies.[70]

The result was that a system of command that had been primarily created to conceal Wolseley's own intellectual deficiencies had by the 1890's become so rigid and ingrown that it resented all other pretensions of schools of warfare, particularly the Indian, and rejected the intrusion of outside talent. By 1898, the high command of the Army had become as closed and as inflexible an instrument as the Duke of Cambridge's Horse Guards clique had ever been: age, the reluctance to depart from tried tactical formulae, the absence of serious military threats and the unassailability of its prestige in spite of the Gordon failure produced the conditions of complacency that were at root responsible for the calamitous mismanagement of the Boer War; for from 1881 to 1898 almost nothing had been accomplished in matters of war organisation and preparedness. The division that developed in the military hierarchy between 1875 and 1880 because of Wolseley's rising popularity, his almost continuous employment by a Prime Minister who deliberately refused to consult the Commander-in-Chief, his steady public flogging of the reform horse, and his tactless manoevring to obtain the Indian command - all of which seemed to constitute a direct challenge to the Duke of Cambridge's authority and prestige - rendered any genuine endeavour on the part of Home and the Intelligence Department to pursue the practical implications of Cardwell's reforms largely unworkable and fictitious, confirmed the Cabinet in their view that the making of military policy

70. Head, Art of Generalship, pp.109-10.

(especially in a crisis) was primarily a matter for statesmen and allowed real War Office influence to be worked by other hands.

If the high command of the Army was divided against itself, the discredited purchase Generals continuing to retain their powers of patronage and obstruction in spite of the untested novelty of the Wolseley Ring, Cardwell's organisational reforms were in a very unsettled and incomplete state, and indeed had already begun to break down. The most arresting feature of Prussia's war organisation, the seeming secret of her sudden and overwhelming victories, was generally held to be the huge expansive power of the 'cadre' or 'reserve' system; by 1881, all the major European military powers had reorganised their military systems along Prussian lines. But the difficulty in Britain was how best to adapt it to the peculiar circumstances of a volunteer army with wide imperial commitments. Cardwell's answer - short-service, linked battalions and localisation - provided only part of the solution. In January 1875, Wolseley claimed that "there is a seeming absence of plan and of fixed military principles from all our military establishments, nor would it appear that any positive decision has been arrived at, having in view the altered condition of military affairs and of military sciences throughout the world, as to what the objects are, that the army is meant to secure, much less the number of men, and the organisation to be given them in order to secure those objects."[71] He himself defined four contingencies which the Army should

71. WO Confdl Paper 0580, 'Our Army Reserve,' G.J.Wolseley, 15 January 1875, Secretary of State's Papers.

be made flexible enough to meet: firstly, expeditions or small wars of the Red River or Ashanti type calling for token contingents; secondly, medium wars such as the Pekin War requiring about one army-corps; thirdly, regular Continental wars requiring two or three army-corps; and finally, invasion, calling for the whole armed manhood of the nation. Since by the constitution the foundation of the Cardwellian system - the Reserve - could only be called out in a state of "imminent national disaster or great emergency" (a term which of necessity still remained undefined and open to much interpretation), Cardwell's measures, whether deliberately intended or not, could only be supposed to have a basis of sense if they were predicated on the assumptions that, firstly, preparation for engagement against a Continental power, either offensively or defensively, was the object in view, and secondly, no involvement in European affairs should be attempted or encouraged until a respectable reserve had been built up. This policy singularly failed to make provision for the type of small war which singly or simultaneously was to break out over the next two decades and which did not fit into the category of national emergency. In such cases, where the reserve was inapplicable, reinforcements could only be obtained by sending fresh battalions from England (thereby violating the linked-battalion principle) or be drawing volunteers from the Militia or other regiments (thereby returning to the very pre-Crimean system that these reforms were designed to overcome). The result, as the Duke of Cambridge, Wolseley, Ellice and Havelock perceived, was to sacrifice the Army for the Reserve and

convert it into "one miserable depot."[72] "The double-battalion system now in force," wrote the Duke of Cambridge in 1875 under the stresses of war, actual and impending, in Ashanti, Natal, China and Central Asia, "is well in theory, but utterly unworkable in practice. We have to call for over 1000 men from other Corps merely to make up the five Regiments" next for foreign service. "The terrible inconvenience and annoyance caused by all this is not to be told, and even as it is they will embark under their strength. What we should do were a sudden demand made upon us for a large number of Regiments I cannot tell, for our Reserve is non-existent unless we call out the Militia Reserves and that could not be thought of without a great national emergency arising."

At the same time, in the absence of a national military policy with specified contingencies and objectives, there was no agreement as to what constituted the proper strength of a Reserve, which, as the War Office Financial Secretary, Colonel F.A.Stanley, noted, was a matter of Cabinet policy.[73] While professional opinion agreed with Wolseley that "the Military position of England can never be in any way satisfactory until we have a really efficient Army Reserve," and that until that time it would be "unwise

72. WO Confdl Paper 0783, 'Minute by the Adjutant-General,' C.H.Ellice, 23 June 1880; WO Confdl Paper 0580, 'Our Army Reserve,' G.J.Wolseley, 15 January 1875, Secretary of State's Papers; Cambridge to Cranbrook, pte, 18 April 1875, Cranbrook Papers, T501/264; Memorandum on the Army Reserve and the Militia Reserve, Sir H.Havelock, 8 November 1876, 'Report of the Committee...with respect to the Militia and Present Brigade Depot System,' Reports, XVIII, 1877, p.567.

73. WO Confdl Paper 0597, June 1875, Secretary of State's Papers.

and unstatesmanlike" to interfere in European affairs, the soldiers were in discord over the strength to be reached before a policy of intervention became practicable, Ellice and MacDougall suggesting 50,000, Wolseley 80,000 - 100,000.[74] In 1875, the Army Reserve stood somewhere between 7,000 and 8,000; but actuarial calculations predicted that not until 1879 would it reach 28,437 and not until 1885, 63,080, the most probable mean.[75] Nor would it be known until the end of the first six-year period in 1876, how many recruits would be required annually to achieve these figures. War Office actuarial estimates predicted a sliding scale, 21,415 being required in 1876 rising to 32,192 in 1879;[76] but Cardwell, MacDougall, Ellice and Wolseley put the quota much higher at 36,610.[77] But even the most conservative estimates were almost double what had been required under long-service; and service life, in spite of mild inducements, had not overnight become twice as attractive. Recruiting fluctuated with the labour market; and in good times the Army was prone to get riff-raff who would not, or boys who could not hold down a man's job. The Duke of Cambridge, supported by the Quarter-Master-General, the Inspector-General of Recruiting and the Director-General, Army Medical Department, bitterly complained that short-service was producing an army of "mere boys" who could not withstand the rigours

74. WO Confdl Paper 0580; WO Confdl Paper 0783, ibid.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

of home, let alone colonial, Indian or European service.[78] "Can anyone expect," wrote the Inspector-General of Recruiting, Lt.-General E.A.Whitmore, "that a congregation of young boys is capable of facing a drilled and disciplined army of old soldiers, and of undergoing the fatigues of an arduous campaign, such as the present state of Europe might bring us face to face with."[79] In these circumstances, it was not likely that the predicted intake would make good the 'wastage' caused by desertion, disease or dishonourable discharge. The localisation scheme had lost all semblance as the strategical basis for a home defence plan; for the majority of the depot centres continued to be located where they could best obtain recruits or put down civil disturbances: and a later attempt to redistribute them more in conformity with the strategical requirements of mobilisation and concentration was effectively resisted by the Home Office.[80] Moreover, until fresh depot centres were constructed, 'localisation' remained but a paper expression and was under continuous investigation and adjustment by departmental committees. A final complication lay in the uncertainty that not until an emergency actually arose could the real strength and effectiveness of the Reserve be ascertained.

The recommendations to remedy these weaknesses and

78. Minute on the Condition of the Army as affected by Short Service, 1877-8, C.H.Ellice, 25 July 1877, ibid; Cambridge to Hardy, pte, 30 November 1874, Cranbrook Papers, T501/264.

79. Minute by E.A.Whitmore, 12 June 1877, encl. in WO Confdl Paper 0783, Secretary of State's Papers.

80. WO Confdl Paper 0971, ibid.

limitations, and to convert the Reserve from a "paper and imaginary" force into a "real" one, were several: to place the infantry battalions first for service "on a more enlarged or quasi-war establishment" by the addition of 8,500 men;[81] to adopt "some entirely new plan" of enlistment, ten years with the Colours, five with the Reserve and six with the Militia;[82] to develop the Militia Reserve as the main reserve of the Army;[83] to appoint "a strong Cabinet committee" to examine the whole question of recruiting;[84] to pass a "National Defence Act" empowering the Government to take immediate emergency precautions in a state of apprehended war;[85] to reframe and redefine the constitution in such a way as to enable the Queen to call out the Reserve for any contingency advised by the Secretary of State for War.[86] But by 1876, in spite of repeated representations by the Duke of Cambridge, Wolseley, Ellice and MacDougall, none of these suggestions had been enacted.[87] The total British force immediately available for operations on the Continent, therefore, consisted of 66,000 home-based

81. Cambridge to Hardy, pte, 18 April 1875, Cranbrook Papers, T501/264.

82. Same to same, pte, 3 November 1875, ibid.

83. Ibid; Havelock, op.cit.

84. Same to same, pte, 30 November 1874, ibid.

85. WO Confdl Paper 0783, Secretary of State's Papers.

86. Draft Report of a Committee assembled at the War Office, under instructions from the Secretary of State for War, to report on the effects of Short Service on the preparedness for War of the Army, encl. in WO Confdl Paper 0783, p.11, ibid.

87. Ibid, p.1.

regulars, the Gibralter and Malta garrisons and a Reserve of approximately 33,000 men which could not be used except in great emergency. There could be no doubt therefore (though this certainly was not admitted or appreciated at the time) that to give any substantial military backing to her diplomacy, Britain would be forced to draw upon India for reserves (although the Cardwell reforms had been specifically designed with the opposite situation in mind) and was therefore ever sensitive that the Indian Army should not get entangled in unnecessary wars. Compared to the resources at the disposal of the Continental military powers this was of negligible significance; and, in the opinion of an impartial but shrewd American observer,[88] British entanglement in a European war during this transitional period could only have one of two possible results; either "the speedy reorganisation of her army" on more realistic lines, or "the total abandonment of the policy of armed intervention in foreign affairs."

The most salutory advance in war organisation and potentially the most important of all Cardwell's measures lay in the development of the Intelligence Branch. Although a most rudimentary system of intelligence had been formed during the Crimean War, and located, it is said, in "a coach-house and stable," the real impulse to its recognition as essential to the planning and conduct of modern war had been imparted by the effectiveness of the Prussian model in the 1860's and 1870's.[89] Chiefly under the inspiration

88. Maj.-General E.Upton, Report of the Armies of Europe and Asia, New York, Appleton, 1878, p.247.

89. WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0721, 'Report on the Intelligence Branch,' Captain E.H.H.Collen, October 1878; Colonel Sir Charles M.Watson, The Life of Major-General Sir Charles Wilson, London, Murray, 1909.

of Captain (later Major-General Sir Charles) Wilson who in 1869 discovered that there was not "then in possession of Government a trustworthy account of any foreign army," a recognizable though improvised branch began to take shape. Wilson's object was "to collect in peace time such information relating to foreign armies that, on the outbreak of war with any country, we would have...the fullest and most recent details concerning the hostile armies: its composition, organisation, tactics, arms, artillery, dress, equipment, etc., as well as of the roads, railways, mountain passes etc., falling within the probable area of operations."[90] But, noted a later report, "the condition of the department was not satisfactory. Besides the want of information about foreign armies, the library and map collection were deficient; reports of the military attaches were seldom received; officers were not sent officially to the Continent; there was no information about the Colonies; and neither the parliamentary, nor the confidential papers relating to army matters, were always sent to the department."[91] In 1870, "when the Government were in want of military information as to continental armies," a committee consisting of Northbrook, Airey, Chapman and Wilson was appointed "to recommend the best means of turning the Topographical Department to the best account:" and the measures they proposed went far towards improving the intelligence situation.[92] Naval as well as military

90. Watson, Life of Wilson, p.79.

91. WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0721, p.4, Secretary of State's Papers.

92. WO Confdl Paper 0457, 'Report of a Committee on the Topographical and Statistical Department, 24 January 1871,' ibid.

information was to be collected, collated and filed along with all parliamentary and departmental reports touching on military affairs; military attaches were brought under closer War Office control and a military archives was to be established. Russian advances in Central Asia stimulated further developments: in 1873, the Intelligence Department was formally instituted under an officer of General rank, Major-General P.L.MacDougall with overall responsibility for the development of contingency plans "in the event of invasion or of foreign warfare." Over the next two years this responsibility was more precisely defined to include the preparation of defence and mobilisation schemes, the compilation of comprehensive accounts of the military resources of all foreign powers (including orders-of-battle, biographies of foreign generals, defensive capabilities of maritime fortresses, and coastal areas susceptible to amphibious landings), and plans for "the best mode of rendering assistance to Belgium, Holland etc., in case of their independence being threatened" and "the best course to pursue in the event of war with Russia under various conditions." Admirable though the concept of such a massive program appeared, there were severe material restrictions preventing its immediate realisation; and by 1876 almost nothing concrete had been accomplished to prepare the country for the amphibious kind of war likely to be waged against Russia.

For all his reputation as a careful military theorist, and for all his authority and experience as a professional reformer, throughout the Russian crisis MacDougall, although nominal head of the Intelligence Branch, played almost no

part in the formulation of military policy, partly no doubt because of ill-health, and partly perhaps, as Chesney believed, because he made the "mistake of trying to keep well with the reform party in the Army, and the anti-reformers at the top of the military world at the same time. He could not conciliate both, and probably both saw what he was doing."[93] On the other hand, as will emerge from subsequent pages, the chief architect of British tactical thought, organisation and policy was the relatively obscure executive head of the Intelligence Department, Major (later Colonel) Robert Home, Royal Engineers. Author of a Precis of Modern Tactics which continued the official tactical manual of the British Army until 1914 and "which is universally considered the best tactical work in the English language;"[94] a serious and perceptive student of Continental military systems; designer of the original mobilisation scheme; head of the Military Mission to Constantinople over the winter of 1876/77; secretary of the Duke of Cambridge's Permanent Defence Committee and of the Permanent Mobilisation Committee (created in May 1877), confidante of Beaconsfield, Simmons, Wolseley and Napier, Home attained a position of unchallengeable influence in the making of military policy before his untimely death by typhoid fever in 1879 while serving on the Bulgarian Frontier Delimitation Commission. "An officer has just passed away," ran the Times obituary, "whose real worth was known to a comparatively

93. Chesney to Northbrook, 3 December 1873, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.C.144/21.

94. Maj.-General W.Porter, History of the Corps of Royal Engineers, London, Longmans, 1889, II, p.534.

little circle: but that circle comprised most of those to whose hands the destinies of the Empire have been entrusted during the last two Administrations:"

> It can very rarely happen that a man should have been so little before the nation and should yet have performed for it such signal services....He was but forty-one years old, yet his reputation was solidly established among those who would certainly hereafter have entrusted him with more extended responsibility and his name would probably then have become a household word among thousands who have now never heard of it....
>
> During the two years when the question of war with Russia was hanging in the balance, it is not too much to say that no more weighty judgement was received on the military bearings of every question which arose than that of Colonel Home. Lord Napier of Magdala, on his arrival in this country, found all difficulties smoothed for him and all facilities in view of a possible campaign afforded by the masterly knowledge which Colonel Home had acquired of every possible aspect of the military and politico-military situation. No one has acknowledged this more enthusiastically than the then presumptive Commander-in-Chief of our armies. At a time when political and military questions were inextricably interwoven, the opinions of a soldier of large views and clear vision were inestimably valuable for state purposes, and after the heated controversies of the day have passed away, and the events of the present period belong to history, it will be found that most of the statesmen who have been engaged in the difficult work of the last few years attribute no small importance to the assistance they have derived from Colonel Home's genius and grasp of facts.
>
> In short, it will be found that the more any man has the opportunity of knowing the history of the many improvements which have of late years been introduced into our army the larger will be his estimate of Colonel Home's share in them....[95]

"He was one of the most valuable of Your Majesty's servants," Beaconsfield told the Queen, "a man capable of

95. Times obituary cited in Royal Engineers' Journal, XI, July 1879, pp.45-6; see also Porter, ibid.

carrying on military operations on a great scale, unrivalled as an engineer and gifted with all the energies and resources of genius. He was the right hand of the Ministry, during the last three anxious years...."[96]

Undoubtedly, Home's most enduring contribution to Britain's military organisation and the basic conditioning factor of her military policy over the next four years lay in the preparation of the first Defence and Mobilisation Scheme framed under the new conditions of warfare: on the one hand, the immense and improved facilities for invasion conferred upon Continental military powers by steam and iron; and on the other, the increased deterrence of coastal and harbour defence made possible by improved weaponry; the immense powers of instantaneous mobilisation, concentration, command and control conferred by the rail and telegraph; and large partially-trained armies provided by the Volunteer movement. In 1872, Wilson had pointed out that "England was the only country in Europe which did not possess a scheme of national defence" and indeed had not possessed one since 1803;[97] but before the recommendations of the Localisation Committee were made known, no serious progress could be made in this direction. In June 1874, however, Home submitted a minute urging "the extreme necessity" for such a plan, and outlining the "large and complicated questions" that were involved: the need to arrive at an exact statement of the total military force

96. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 2 February 1879, 'Copies of Letters to and from the Queen,' Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/B/84/127.

97. WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0721, Report, p.6.

available in England and its division into field and garrison armies; the strategical considerations governing the selection of concentration areas and defensive positions; the anticipated invasion landing areas and objectives of inland operations; and finally the defensive strategy required in the defence of London and other vital centres, and in the defeat of the invading army.[98] By January 1875, Home had further produced the "framework of the system that is being adopted in carrying out the proposed Defensive Scheme, and the steps which should immediately be taken in the event of a sudden invasion, with our present means of defence," in which he proposed the formation of eight army-corps scattered strategically throughout the kingdom.[99] By mid-1876, all but "the strategy of the defence" had been planned in detail. "We may now conclude," commented the Times,[100] "that the principles and main outlines of our military organisation are definitely settled. The Army is no longer in the crucible or liable to reconstruction, and Secretaries of War may now confine themselves to the comparatively simple task of systematically improving its administration in detail." But this was far from being the case. At the same time, the view of that persistent Parliamentary critic, J.P.Holms, that the defence plan was "the most pretentious military scheme which has been submitted to the country during the century" was also wildly injudicious.[101] It is true that until Parliament

98. Ibid, p.20.

99. WO Confdl Paper 0606, Secretary of State's Papers.

100. Times, 6 March 1877.

101. Ibid, 18 January 1876.

legislated for the provision of eight army-corps and extensive coastal defence works, the plan would remain no more than a blueprint for future action; but Home's principal intention had been to disclose the giant discrepancies that existed between "our present means of defence" and those that would be "absolutely necessary" in the event of invasion by a major Continental power.[102] The scheme provided a basis for future military policy; and it was generally admitted that to "foresee and provide for all contingencies" must necessarily "be the work of time," the object of careful, continuous but gradual improvement.[103] It was the first scientific attempt "to tie our bundle of sticks into a wieldable fasces" and to co-ordinate the respective capabilities of the regulars, militia and volunteers; and it established the groundwork for Brackenbury's and Ardagh's similar endeavours to compel the Government to adopt a defence scheme over a decade later.[104] Nevertheless, the fact remained that as a home defence scheme it was a long-term project, and that by 1876 it had scarcely begun to mature.

The major deterrent to its completion were the Russian advances in Central Asia and the war scare of 1875, and the resultant increasing absorption of the Intelligence Branch in problems of offensive warfare and the preparation of two army-corps for service "on the Continent of Europe or elsewhere." The Intelligence Branch was called upon to

102. WO Confdl Paper 0606. These discrepancies were estimated at 93,793 men, 40,306 horses, 5,853 carriages and 204 guns.

103. Ibid.

104. Royal Engineers' Journal, XI, July 1879, pp.45-6.

examine "various possible theatres of offensive warfare" and collect "minute information as to the different possible points where an expeditionary force might be required to land."[105] Handbooks were prepared on the defensive capabilities of that most precious outwork of British security, the Low Countries, Belgium and Denmark (and their "Colonies and Oriental military resources") in relation to the military and naval power of Germany and on the strategical considerations governing British intervention in a war against Germany.[106] In this natural and traditional concern for the immediate security of the Low Countries, systematic examination of the military resources and topography of those Eastern powers which would be in some way involved in a war against Russia - Austria, Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan - was not carried so far, and in some cases had been altogether neglected. The War Office account of the Russian Army was derived from a translated Austrian pamphlet of 1871 modified by such technical information concerning Russian army reforms as Wellesley had been able to procure;[107] but almost nothing was known of the condition of her coastal defences, strategic railways, mobilisation scheme or the disposition of her military resources in Europe, Caucasia, Trans-Caspia or the Far East - the most likely theatres of operations. Except for Vincent's unofficial study of Turkish military administration and organisation, no recent authoritative account existed of

105. WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0721, Report, p.10.

106. Ibid, p.56.

107. F.V.Greene, The Russian Army and its Campaigns in Turkey in 1877-1878, New York, Appleton, 1879, p.viii.

the state of the Bulgarian and Armenian fortresses or of the defences at Constantinople and Gallipoli. Similarly, other than the unofficial reconnaissance reports of Napier, Baker, Burnaby and MacGregor, little reliable was known concerning the capabilities of Persia and Afghanistan for offensive or defensive warfare; and what little there was remained, in the absence of an Indian Army Intelligence Department, uncoordinated and uncorrelated. This distressing lack of intelligence in planning concentric operations against Russia was rooted partly in the Liberal policy of non-interference; partly in the immense (and in the absence of clear military policy, often vague) scope of the duties of the Intelligence Branch in preparing for warlike contingencies on a global scale; partly in the disproportionate smallness of that Branch for such a task (besides MacDougall and Home there were only six permanent section heads); and partly in the lack of properly trained military attaches and the conventions governing their selection and employment.

In the tradition of British diplomacy and the strict constitutional subordination of military to political authority, in an instinctive endeavour to obviate the dangers of imperious soldier-diplomats subverting the functions and authority of the diplomatic corps or precipitating a crisis, there were exceptionally few precedents for the employment of high-ranking officers at key ambassadorial posts in the Continental fashion, although the Consul-Generalships at Warsaw, Belgrade and Bucharest were sometimes held by soldiers and Beaconsfield had recourse himself to entrust diplomatic missions to soldiers during the Russian

crisis. Military representation was therefore confined to military attaches whose appointments were usually made (as in the case of Wellesley and Dickson) for personal or family reasons. They were placed directly under the authority and at the disposal of the ambassador, were usually given no specific instructions from the War Office and submitted all their reports - technical as well as general - through Foreign Office channels. Such a system ensured a close, harmonious and properly regulated civil-military relationship; but its effectiveness as an intelligence agency depended upon the initiative, rank and depth of pocket of the individual military attache, and the quality of information necessarily ranged unevenly from grave discussions of high military policy to base details of camp equipment. Rank (and therefore potential influence and penetrability behind the scenes) was commensurate with the military importance of the power concerned; while a General Officer for example was accredited to Berlin and Paris, there were only Captains at St.Petersburg and Vienna, and no military attaches at all at Constantinople, Rome or Tehran. In these circumstances, the War Office was compelled to resort to military spying or to supplement their intelligence concerning the East from the writings of explorers, travellers and consular officials whose lack of professional military experience may have made them distort or unable to appreciate intelligence of real military significance. At the same time, without separate Admiralty or Indian Army intelligence systems, the responsibility for the preparation of combined operations and for an imperial war policy generally tended to gravitate exclusively to the War Office.

Conflicting interpretations as to the nature of the tactical revolution, and the principal emphasis upon Prussian organisation and administration, meant that the growth of British strategic and tactical thought - manifested in the works of Hamley, Havelock, Denison, MacDougall, Home and Clery - was largely individual and haphazard and often lacked sanction as official doctrine.[108] The attention given to Prussian tactics by the Wellington Essays and Home's Precis resulted in the need for treatises on amphibious, insurrectionary and mountain warfare passing unnoticed. With Hamley's appointment as Commandant, the Staff College became the centre for strategic and tactical thought, and of preparation "for the actual conduct of war;"[109] but it does not seem to have stimulated much original thought or to have had much abiding influence.[110] A more influential forum for professional thought and opinion was the Royal United Service Institution whose special lecturers and prize essays often trespassed into fields of military policy, sometimes as in the case of Brackenbury, Hamley and Colomb with considerable effect. But in spite of these institutions, the number of prospective commanders who had seriously studied

108. A.W.Preston,"British Military Thought, 1856-1890," Army Quarterly, LXXXVIII, October 1964, pp.57-74; J.Luvaas, The Education of an Army: British Military Thought, 1815-1940, London, Cassell, 1965.

109. Hamley to Northbrook, 20 February 1875, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/23/41.

110. Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, From Midshipman to Field-Marshal, London, Methuen, 1906, pp.214-5; Major-General Sir H.M.Bengough, Memories of a Soldier's Life, London, Arnold, 1913, p.94; A.R.Godwin-Austen, The Staff and the Staff College, London, Constable, 1927.

modern military theory and organisation was remarkably few.

The question of the conduct of amphibious warfare was a natural concomitant to the emphasis upon offensive warfare; in 1874, Hamley introduced combined operations as the major subject for study at the Staff College;[111] the Duke of Cambridge urged that combined manoevres be held annually,[112] and in a lecture before the R.U.S.I., Major-General Collinson stressed the necessity for working out the details of joint naval and military expeditions in peacetime and establishing in war "a single War Ministry," "a single controlling power over our war policy." "The War Minister of England," he wrote, "should be the strategist of the Empire."[113] The following year, a War Office-Admiralty Committee was appointed to examine the conduct of combined operations under the new conditions of warfare; but its report was disarmingly naive.[114] "To a nation possessing command of the sea," ran the preamble, "a combined naval and military operation is extremely easy and only requires previous organisation....It will be always necessary to work out at some time or other the details of any scheme involving combined naval and military operations. Many such can be thought of beforehand, and prepared during the

111. General Sir E.B.Hamley, Staff College Essays, London, Blackwoods, 1875.

112. Cambridge to Hardy, pte, 3 November 1875, Cranbrook Papers, T501/264.

113. Major-General T.B.Collinson, "The Strategic Importance of the Military Harbours in the British Channel as connected with Defensive and Offensive Operations," J.R.U.S.I., XVIII, April 1874, pp.228-51.

114. Preliminary Report of Committee appointed to Consider Movement of Organised Bodies of Troops by Sea, 1875, Secretary of State's Papers.

leisure of peace. Such schemes should be kept among the secret papers of the Intelligence Branch...and require necessary final touches in time of war." Five hypothetical cases were examined, but the difficulties of landing on a hostile shore against entrenched opposition in force were almost contemptuously dismissed. No mention was made of the fact that no common Army-Navy signalling code was in general use (although Burgoyne's Committee of 1865 had urged the adoption of such), and that no official manual for the conduct of combined operations existed - an omission that lasted until 1911. Nevertheless, this Committee did enunciate the special conditions which determined the outcome of combined operations, and reiterated Collinson's demand for a permanent secretariat to work out in peace and adjust in war schemes of amphibious operations. This latter recommendation exposed perhaps the most serious weakness of British war administration. Throughout the seventies, more than one voice was heard urging the creation of some form of Cabinet Defence Committee responsible for the formulation of imperial war policy and for the coordination of the several independent (and often conflicting) viewpoints that emerged from as well as for the interested departments. Under the exigencies of political warfare, Beaconsfield consistently refused to take any overt measures which could be misconstrued abroad as deliberately bellicose or provocative without first ensuring that certain desirable diplomatic results would follow. In the present military condition of Britain, he saw the defence of India essentially as a matter of diplomatic manoevre and military bluff, a question not of actual but of apprehended warfare which

could only be handled at the highest political levels. Moreover, the divided nature of Cabinet, Parliamentary, public and military opinion underlined the cardinal military axiom that every addition to a war council must tend against speed of decision and preservation of secrecy; and Beaconsfield felt his predilection for 'personal' diplomacy and unofficial advice both reinforced and justified. In these circumstances, he was not disposed or able to share his secrets with or entrust the formulation of military policy to a committee of defence experts. Thus, while the need for a single comprehensive strategic policy which took into account the different conceptions of where and how Indian interests could be most profitably defended might have suggested itself to a later generation of Staff Officers, the strands of influence - the permanent defence committee, the permanent combined operations committee and the permanent mobilisation committee - remained uncoordinated, and strategy throughout the Eastern crisis remained the province of independent initiatives rather than an organisational function.

iv. The Foundations of Indian Military Policy.

If these inherent limitations confounded Britain's capacity for waging war, how much more serious was the unreformed situation in India whose prospects of Continental warfare were even greater. The character of post-Mutiny Indian administration was no less overwhelmingly military than that of Russia; but its prime function through a reconstituted Army was to reduce, if not eliminate, the possibility of the contagion of a second Mutiny rather

than to prepare for offensive or defensive operations against a European power whose appearance in force beyond the borders of India was deemed to be a distant and chimerical contingency. The Viceroy's official military adviser, the Commander-in-Chief, known throughout India as the 'Great War Lord', sat superior to the Military Member on the Supreme Council, took a commensurate share in the formulation of, besides being responsible for the execution of military policy, often suggested policies or schemes inimical to the Viceroy's views and acted for the Viceroy in his absence; while his unofficial adviser, the Military Secretary, - a post variously held by no mean soldiers, Baring, Colley, Gordon, Brackenbury and Ardagh - exerted a direct and at times exclusive powerful shaping influence. The majority of the members of the Supreme Council regardless of function; the great Commissioners and Lt. Governors of the Presidencies who were intended to be triennial or quinquennical Caesars; the Political Agents, explorers, surveyors and road-builders: all were invariably serving officers of more or less rank. The distinctive caste complexions of the individual Presidential Armies were so emphasised, their inferior armaments and training so maintained, the British contonments so dispersed, the rail and road communications so constructed as to localise and suppress mutiny instantaneously and expeditiously; but these were also the conditions that made effective and harmonious cooperation for combined large-scale manoevres or trans-frontier operations impracticable if not impossible of achievement.

The multiple responsibility for military policy and the compartmentalised structure of the Presidential

system militated against the central direction so necessary for the expeditious prosecution of modern warfare: there was no Indian Army reserve (except the effete Madrasees whom Lytton described as "a huge gypsy camp...a more weedy, seedy, wretched set of creatures never seen in uniform since Falstaff organised his ragged regiments,")[115] no Intelligence Department, no mobilisation scheme. Indian frontier strategy, so far as it was thought about, was wholly defensive in character.[116] Nevertheless, by 1872 there was a significant atmosphere of change. Sir William Mansfield and Sir Henry Durand had recommended but in vain the abolition of the Presidential Armies and their amalgamation as four Army Corps under a single Minister of War;[117] as well as the creation of a single frontier province from Kashmir to Karachi under a supreme Frontier Commissioner directly responsible to the Viceroy.[118] The notorious eccentric Havelock, described by Wolseley as having "just

115. Lytton to Cambridge, pte, 20 February 1879, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/19.

116. The bulk of Indian military opinion subscribed to Hamley's view that mountain frontiers are best defended by establishing entrenched camps on the reverse slopes rather than occupying the debouches of the passes on the forward slopes.

117. Minute in Council by Sir Henry Durand, 30 August 1869; Minutes by the Commander-in-Chief, Sir William Mansfield, 3 August, 11 September 1869, Mayo Papers, Cambridge; W.W.Hunter, A Life of the Earl of Mayo, London, Smith Elder, 2 vols., 1876, II, pp.122-6.

118. Minute by Col. O.T.Burne on the Sindh Frontier, 1 December 1875, citing Minute by Sir Henry Durand 28 September 1867, encl. Military Letter, no.306, 8 October 1867, IO.Political and Secret Records, Misc.

missed being the first soldier of his time,"[119] and whose papers reveal him to have considerable pretensions as a strategist,[120] had advocated a more economical and efficacious redistribution of the Indian Army based on the wider use of mounted infantry.[121] In 1871, MacGregor had established the United Service Institution of India,[122] promoted with Collen discussion on the need for an Indian Intelligence Department,[123] and, by example more than anything else, inspired the "formation of a school of military explorers."[124]

119. A.W.Preston(ed.), Wolseley's Journal of the Zulu War, (to be published), p.15; Cf. G.T.Denison to whom Wolseley appears to have made a similar remark. See Soldiering in Canada: Recollections and Experiences, Toronto, Morany, 1900, p.148. Havelock replaced Wolseley as Deputy-Quarter-Master-General in Canada in 1868.

120. Alan Bell(Historical Manuscripts Commission), to the author, 15 March 1965.

121. Major Sir Henry M.Havelock, Three Main Military Questions of the Day, London, Longmans Green, 1867, pp.66-115; see also 'Official Reply' by Sir Henry Durand, Roberts Papers.

122. Lady MacGregor(ed.), The Life and Opinions of Major-General Sir Charles Metcalfe MacGregor, London, Blackwood, 1888, 2 vols., I, p.329.

123. Capt. J.A.S.Colquoun, "Essay on the Formation of an Intelligence Department for India,"(Durand Prize Essay), P.U.S.I.I., vol.4, no.18, 1875, pp.1-73; Capt. G.T. Plunkett, "On the Organisation of an Intelligence Department," P.U.S.I.I., vol.4, no.19, 1875, pp.123-28; Capt. E.H.H.Collen, "Memorandum on the Formation of an Intelligence Branch," 17 June 1876, India Military Proceedings, vol.954, no.196; WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0721, "Report on the Intelligence Branch," Appdx.1, pp.115-28; MacGregor, Life and Opinions, pp.305-06.

124. MacGregor, Life and Opinions, II, p.403; Roberts' speech before U.S.I.I., 3 July 1881.

Napier had instituted 'Camps of Exercise' for the practice of Prussian tactics.[125] The arrival of Northbrook and Baring (both of whom had been closely associated with Cardwell's reforms), as Viceroy and Military Secretary respectively, was therefore significantly auspicious:[126] they remained in close touch with Cardwell, Storks and the Intelligence Department[127] and attempted to introduce a more comprehensive scheme of army re-organisation along the lines adopted in England;[128] but they were resisted by Napier, Haines and Norman (with the full support of the Duke of Cambridge)[129] on the grounds that "Chips from a

125. Napier Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.F.114/5/14; E.Upton, Report on the Armies of Europe and Asia, p.425.

126. It is significant that Wolseley had been asked by Northbrook to go to India as his Military Secretary, but Wolseley had turned the offer down because of his wife's pregnancy. Wolseley to Northbrook, 1 March 1872, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/20/6.

127. Cardwell to Northbrook, 20 November, 3 May, 12 July, 20 September 1872; Storks to Northbrook, 23 August, 30 September 1872; Northbrook to Cardwell, 3 October, 7 December 1872, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/13-20.

128. Argyll to Northbrook, 12 August 1873; Northbrook to Argyll, 8 September 1873, ibid; "Lord Northbrook's Army Reform Proposals and other military matters," Argyll Papers, IO.Microfilms, reels 311-325.

129. Napier to Northbrook, 13 November 1874; Northbrook to Napier, 15 October 1874; Norman to Northbrook, pte, 9 July 1875, 'Correspondence with Persons in India'; Cambridge to Northbrook, 25 September, 23 October 1872, 30 January 1873; Northbrook to Cambridge, 22 July 1872, 'Correspondence with Persons in England,' Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/13,14,20,21.

German Workshop" were unsuited to the peculiar conditions of Indian warfare and inconsistent with the special problem of Indian internal security; and they eventually succumbed to the ascendant and placid reasoning and unprovocative policies of 'masterly inactivity', suggesting only those technical or 'tinkering' improvements in pay, leave and promotion which were designed to keep the Sepoy happy and divert his attention from the potentially troublesome implications of the Russian advance. The dangerous inopportuneness of reform was henceforth persistently held to be the principal argument against it: but the need for some military preparation was patently clear.[130]

In his celebrated 'Memorandum on the Central Asian Question', Rawlinson had analysed the significance of Romanoffski's plan and the probable effects upon India of further Russian encroachment and intrigue if allowed to continue unresisted. But his apprehensions and the remedial measures he proposed - the re-establishment of British agents and the strengthening of British influence at Cabul and Tehran, the development of strategic lines of communication towards the North-West Frontier, and the occupation of Quetta, the Bolan and the Kurram Passes, were, like Havelock's, roundly and almost unanimously denounced by the members of the Supreme and Home Councils, not only because they promised to engulf India "in the profitless abyss of Affghan

130. IO.Military and Marine Despatches from India, nos.51 and 52, 3 March 1876; no.53, 18 March 1876. Rawlinson objected to this limited program of reform, "Memorandum by Sir Henry Rawlinson on Native Army Reorganisation, 30 June 1876," Minute Paper 1512, Military Letters to India, no.215, 10 August 1876.

revolutions,"[131] but because the Indian armies were unprepared, materially and psychologically, for the offensive operations necessary to sustain such a policy. Both Rawlinson and MacGregor[132] felt their views were largely vindicated by the Russian annexation of Khiva in 1873 - bringing her within manageable distance of Merv and Afghanistan - and by Wellesley's reports from St. Petersburg that Kauffman and Grand Duke Michael were relentlessly pressing further expeditions upon a wavering Tsar;[133] the repercussions of which in London portrayed all the symptoms

131. "Remarks on Sir Henry Rawlinson's Memorandum on Central Asia," Brig.-General Lumsden, 21 September 1876; "Memorandum on Paper by Sir H.Rawlinson on Central Asian Progress of Russia," D.F.MacLeod; "Memorandum by Col. R.Taylor," 23 November 1868; "Memorandum by Sir John Lawrence," 23 November 1868; "Minute by the Hon. Sir R.Temple," 8 December 1868; "Minute on the subject of the progress of Russia in Central Asia, and of the defence of our North-West Frontier," H.W.Norman, 12 December 1868; "Minute by the Commander-in-Chief (Sir W.R.Mansfield) suggested by Sir H.Rawlinson's Memorandum on the Questions connected with Central Asia, dated 24 December 1868"; "Minute by Sir R.H.Davies on Sir H.Rawlinson's paper on Russian Progress in Central Asia, 27 December 1868," IO.PSR, Misc.

132. Rawlinson, Russia and England, pp.v-ix,301-84; C.M. MacGregor, "Memorandum on the Merv Question," Narrative of a Journey through the Province of Khorassan and on the North-West Frontier of Afghanistan in 1875, London, Allen, 1879, Appdx.A; cf MacGregor, Life and Opinions, pp.21-23.

133. Wellesley to Derby, no.4, 7 June 1873; no.30, secret and confdl, 12 October 1874; no.48, secret, 21 December 1874; no.11, most secret, 2 March 1875; no.14, most secret, 17 March 1875; no.16, most secret, 23 March 1875; no.19, most secret, 26 March 1875; no.23, secret, 16 April 1875, 'Letterbooks of Col. Fred Wellesley,' Cowley Papers, FO 519/124; cf FO 65/926,927,957.

of a 'war scare'.[134]

Both Salisbury and Northbrook were besieged with letters from Rawlinson and the Duke of Cambridge urging greater preparedness for war, opposition to reductions in and provision of breech-loaders to the Native Army, the construction of a railway to Quetta, and the establishment of agents at Herat and elsewhere.[135] The Duke of Cambridge repeatedly recommended Wolseley to Napier as Adjutant-General in India;[136] the War Office published its first issue of 'Russian advances in Asia';[137] while Wolseley inveighed the public to study "the defence of India...as a strategical problem."[138] Since Persia occupied "the key

134. Rawlinson to Northbrook, 8 November 1872, 14 February and 5 December 1873. Rawlinson described the reaction as "a good deal of sensation;" Argyll looked upon it as an "absurd fuss;" Argyll to Northbrook, 14 February 1873, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/9,20-23.

135. Cambridge to Salisbury, pte, 24 December 1874, 28 August, 2 November 1875, Salisbury Papers; Rawlinson to Northbrook, 8 November 1872, 14 February, 5 December 1873; Salisbury to Northbrook, pte, 3 July 1874, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/11,21.

136. Cambridge to Napier, pte, 25 July, 23 May, 10 April 1873, Napier Family Papers; Wolseley to R.Wolseley, 15 August 1873, Wolseley Family Papers.

137. WO Paper 0547, 'For official circulation only,' Secretary of State's Papers,

138. G.J.Wolseley, "Our Coming Guest," Blackwood's, CXIII, June 1873, pp.427-46; Wolseley to R.Wolseley, 15 August 1873, WFP, Wolseley described this article as "the worst thing I have ever written." Wolseley to Lytton, 10 August 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/517/4.

to the whole position of affairs in the East," it should be materially strengthened and its Legation elevated to a Military Embassy. Alarmed by reports that the Native Army was "in a state of hopeless inefficiency," and by Johnson's assurance that 10,000 men could not "be concentrated on one point without denuding essential positions,"[139] again and again the sarcastic Salisbury, in the freshness of office allegedly unimpressed by experts or Russian military strength, unconvinced of the strategic importance of Merv and of the usefulness of further diplomatic remonstrances to St. Petersburg,[140] and suffering, in the opinion of a colleague, from unsound and unstable judgement and "a dangerous unfixedness of ideas,"[141] urged Northbrook "to be thoroughly informed on all matters - strategical, geographical, political - on all questions of commissariat, of communication, of military position, on the road from Herat to our frontier." "Our information," he wrote, "as to all that passes near it should be complete; our plans for acting along it, if need be, should be ready in all detail...as the Prussians were for a march on Paris."[142] Agents "unavowed - if avowed cannot be had" - should be stationed in Herat and Cabul and a railway commenced to Quetta as a demonstration to "our subjects, allies and... others" that "we were not apathetic, or indifferent, to

139. Salisbury to Northbrook, pte, 12 June, 24 December 1874, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/11.

140. Same to same, 24 May 1874, ibid.

141. Perry to Northbrook, 4 December 1876, ibid.

142. Salisbury to Northbrook, pte, 10 and 17 July 1874, ibid.

what is going on in the North-West."[143]

Northbrook at first resisted these demands believing that the "flutter" about invasion had been much exaggerated in England by the military party and press, that a system of intelligence agents would only result in the accumulation of "a mass of lies 'of sorts' and perhaps some truths....," and that no durable solution could be found in a secret policy of counter-intrigue and surreptitious preparation.[144] It would "excite a religious enthusiasm which would probably react" prejudicially against our position in India. But he eventually relented, pressed for the adoption of breech-loaders for the Native Army, advocated material aid to Persia and Afghanistan, and called upon Napier, Staveley and Roberts to prepare a plan of campaign.[145]

The Napier-Roberts plan emphasised the dangers of and difficulty in countering Russian intrigue and insurrectionary warfare, deplored the prevailing defensive complexion of Indian strategy, and, after analysing the five most likely Russian lines of advance outlined by Captain East in 1869, proposed that agents be positioned along the most feasible at Balkh, Herat, Candahar and Cabul. The degree of unpreparedness of the Indian Army for offensive warfare was implicit in the extreme measures they felt were necessary

143. Same to same, pte, 3 July 1874, ibid.

144. Northbrook to Salisbury, 30 April, 2 June, 10 June 1874; same to Halifax, 21 March 1873, ibid.

145. Northbrook to Napier, pte and confdl, 14 November 1874; same to Salisbury, pte, 22 January 1875; same to Norman, 22 January 1875; Staveley to Northbrook, 10 July 1875, ibid; Napier to Roberts, 10 July 1874, Roberts Papers, R49/8; see also Salisbury Papers and Napier Family Papers.

to achieve an adequate operational footing, the most dramatic being the disclosure that without 27,000 British reinforcements the Indian Army could only dispose of 40-50,000 troops by drastically reducing inland garrisons and accepting the risk of the beneficent passiveness of frontier tribes and Native Princes. In its ultimate conception, the plan envisaged two light columns, 10-15,000 strong, operating defensively from the Khyber and Kurram Passes while a third heavy column, 30,000 strong, struck offensively towards the conjectured Russian flank at Candahar.[146] Northbrook felt this plan "ample by way of preparation" and only strengthened his "former impression that the idea of Russia making a serious attack upon India is a bugbear, and that it would be a military operation so desperate as to be next door to impossible."[147] It served as a refuge for Salisbury on the one hand and Haines and Norman on the other in their strategical debate with Lytton and Colley: but it was founded on the assumption that every extension of Russian imperial power diminished rather than augmented its capacity and vigour for offensive operations, and that Russian armies could therefore be decisively defeated in a single defensive battle to the west of Candahar and Herat.

But the crux of the Indian defence problem lay elsewhere: the implications for India of Russian-inspired insurrections in the Turkish Balkan provinces was dramatically

146. Northbrook to Salisbury, pte, 22 January 1875, ibid; "Memorandum to consider our Military Position in India, and the arrangements that would be necessary in the event of the Russians advancing South of the Oxus," F.S.Roberts, 1 July 1874, Roberts Papers; also Wolseley Official Papers, W35.

147. Northbrook to Salisbury, pte, 22 January 1875, ibid.

emphasised by the publication of Frere's open letter to Sir John Kaye, of Burnaby's best-selling Ride to Khiva, Baker's Clouds in the East, and similar inflammatory works by Vanbery, Terentyev and Thielman;[148] and especially by Rawlinson's Russia and England in the East which owed its immense appeal to its timeliness and readability, to its deliberately tactless disclosure of official documents and to the author's eminence and authority and special position as head of the Political and Secret Department at the India Office, President of the Royal Geographical Society, and unchallenged expert on Central Asian affairs. Both Baring and Adye (as the Opposition's unofficial military advisers) ably criticised the propriety and substance of all these publications;[149] while Northbrook singularly disavowed[150] Rawlinson's work as vigorously as Ripon denounced MacGregor's precipitate Defence of India ten years later.[151] But none could escape the fact that the 'defence of India' question had entered upon a critical stage.

Frere's was the most comprehensive defence policy to be offered under the new conditions and had a decisive shaping influence upon Lytton which he later professed

148. Frere to Kaye, 12 June 1874, Roberts Papers.

149. "Memorandum on the Central Asian Question," Capt. E. Baring, Cromer Papers, PRO/30/6/16; Major-General J.M.Adye, Blackwoods, June 1875; J.M.Adye, Recollections of a Military Life, London, Smith Elder, 1895; Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/7.

150. Northbrook to Rawlinson, pte, 31 March 1875, Rawlinson to Northbrook, 5 March 1875; Northbrook to Davies, pte, 17 September 1875, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/13-15.

151. MacGregor, Life and Opinions, II, pp.314-61.

to regret.[152] It called for "the establishment of a perfect intelligence department of European officers in Affghanistan, and, if possible, a preponderating influence there," but he would not attempt its subjugation or military occupation. He would "greatly increase our naval force in Indian seas, and...make those seas take the place of the Mediterranean as the ordinary cruising ground of one of our principal squadrons." The possession of Malta and Gibralter provided sufficient local strength against any combination of other Mediterranean naval powers, but the opening of the Suez Canal had "materially altered our naval position in India" providing the Mediterranean and even American naval powers with "some days start of us in getting to the coast of India. A well directed naval expedition might now establish a hostile force on our Indian coasts, in a position to be seriously troublesome, while our attention was directed north-westwards....Hitherto the Viceroy has had little need for thinking of his Navy, but in the next war he will have to make it his chief concern." As to Turkey and Persia, he would adopt "a position of watchful isolation" and "not attempt the establishment of any exclusive or special influence, political or military." He would undertake a "thorough reform" of the Indian Army, exploit more readily the loyalty of the feudatory States, develop the "great strategical lines of communication," remove the permanent seat of Government to the Western sea-coast or North-West Frontier, and provide the conditions whereby the Indian Government might concentrate exclusively upon this pre-eminent defensive issue by remitting its distractive

152. Frere to Kaye, 12 June 1874, p.7, Roberts Papers.

responsibilities for the affairs of Persia, Arabia and Africa.

Salisbury was extremely impressed with these arguments:[153] for the re-opening of the Balkan question and the concentration of the Russian armies in Bessarabia and Trans-Caucasia in conformity with Fadeef's and Obruchev's plan for the occupation of Constantinople and the decisive and irrevocable settlement of the Oriental question[154] only served to underline the real distractive significance of intrigue in Afghanistan and insurrectionary warfare along the North-West Frontier by which the Russians, in introducing a fundamental dichotomy into British-Indian defence policy not easily reconciled, and bringing about a crucial division of military power and objectives, could hope to "besiege Constantinople from the heights above Peshawur" or India from the heights above Constantinople.[155]

153. Salisbury to Northbrook, pte, 5 November 1874, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/11.

154. Wellesley to Derby, no.31, secret, 11 October 1876; no.37, 17 November 1876; no.39, 22 November 1876; no.43, confdl, 6 December 1876, 'Letterbooks of Col. Fred. Wellesley," Cowley Papers, FO.519/124; Wellesley, With the Russians, pp.165-76. WO Confdl Paper 0621, "The Steps which Russia would take should she determine to occupy the Principalities in the Spring," Capt. F.C.H. Clarke, August 1876; WO Confdl Paper 0622, "Memorandum on the Probable course of action which would be adopted by the Russians in the event of their attempting to occupy Bulgaria and march on Constantinople," Capt. E. Baring, 16 October 1876; PRO/WO 33/26; Wolseley Official Papers, W35; Cromer Papers, PRO/30/6/16. "Memorandum of Obruchev," 4 April 1877, M.A.Hasenkampf, Moi Dnevnik, 1877-8, St. Petersburg, 1908, Appdx.4, p.462. Disraeli to Derby, confdl, 21 October 1876, bound volume, 'Letters from Lord Beaconsfield,' Derby Papers.

155. Salisbury to Northbrook, 19 and 26 February, 5 and 25 March, 18 June, 18 August, 12 and 19 November 1875, Northbrook Papers, ibid.

The consequent measures taken to ensure the security of the British-Indian sea-route and land frontier - the approaches to Afghanistan and Khelat for a defensive alliance and an invitation to establish agents at Herat, Balkh, Candahar and Cabul, the purchase of the Khedive's shares, MacDougall's plan for the defence of the Suez Canal and Egypt ("a bridge of passage to India and...a bridle on Constantinople and the Levant")[156] against land aggression from the North-East, and the strengthening of Aden and the Persian Gulf[157] to prevent the establishment of a Russian naval station at the head of the Euphrates Valley, were in Salisbury's opinion, "declarations of policy" which "may very possibly hasten the denouement of the Oriental drama and...make the Eastern Question march rather faster."[158] But they also, in juxtaposing the simultaneous threats to Constantinople and Merv as twin elements of British policy purportedly carrying equal weight, prepared the way for the struggle between Salisbury and

156. Memorandum by P.L.MacDougall on the Defence of Egypt, 3 March 1876, "Army, Resources, Topography of Egypt," India Military Proceedings, vol.541, nos.347 and 348: see also copy Secretary of State's Papers. "Report on the Maritime Canal connecting the Mediterranean at Port Said with the Red Sea at Suez," Capt. Richards and Lt.-Col. A.Clarke, Accounts and Papers, 1870, XLIV, Cmd.42; P.L.MacDougall, "The Khedive's Egypt and our route to India," Blackwoods, October 1877, CXXII, pp.477-90.

157. "Memorandum on the Importance of Aden," Lord Napier, 13 January 1875, encl. in Roberts to Burne, 28 January 1875, "Fortifications to be maintained in the Bengal Presidency," IMP, vol.958, no.368.

158. Salisbury to Northbrook, pte, 26 November and 3 December 1875, Northbrook Papers, ibid.

Lytton over a 'continental' or an 'amphibious' strategical policy which was to become the central issue in the two years preceding the Afghan War.

There can be no doubt that Lytton's administration constituted a decisive and irrevocable departure in the direction and character of Indian military policy the impetus of which remained predominant until the last days of the Raj. Decried by his detractors as a "fantastic" and "clever Bohemian" who, with his "little stock of notions about Oriental Government and la haute politique in Asia," was "anxious to do something brilliant with his Viceroyalty,"[159] Lytton brought to this "supreme but awful" post an experience of Continental Courts and diplomacy and an eloquence of despatch never attained before or since;[160] was specifically charged with the inauguration of a fresh and highly personal

159. Lyall to his mother, 24 May, 12 and 26 June, 27 December 1877, Lyall Papers(uncatalogued); see also Mackenzie to Northbrook, 27 April 1880. "There could not have been a more unfortunate conjunction of minds in the Government of India than that of Lord Lytton and Sir John Strachey. Each of them clever to the degree of despising all who differ with them; each of them penetrated with what I may call, perhaps, the 'diplomatic' instinct, each of them preferring 'finesse' to simple play, and deeming the outside world too rustic to suspect their game. They have succeeded in surrounding the Government with such a haze of mystification and doubt that every utterance of their Press Commissioner is scanned as one looks at a prize acrostic." see also Daly to Northbrook, 28 April 1880. "The manner of his doing has often savoured of 'foreign parts,' and melodramatic puffery." Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/13-15.

160. See especially Lytton to Salisbury, pte, 16 July 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/2.

interpretation of frontier policy[161] that owed much to the inspiration of Rawlinson and Frere,[162] and was ultimately disavowed by the perfidious Salisbury.[163] Pelly's predictable failure at Peshawur[164] to arrive at an immediate and permissive defence arrangement with an estranged Afghanistan already responsive to Russian overtures strengthened the Viceroy's conviction that true Indian security from Russian intrigue lay in the adoption of timely defensive measures and the radical re-orientation of Indian strategical policy that had already been outlined by his Military Secretary while on the voyage to India. An intimate friend of Wolseley, Home and Lytton, prospective Commandant of the Staff College, an admirer and student of Prussian military organisation, it is difficult to exaggerate the huge, continuous and confidential influence that Colley exerted upon the formulation

161. Government of India to Secretary of State, no.21, secret, 2 July 1877, I.O.Political and Secret Records.

162. Lytton to Salisbury, pte, 25 March 1876; same to Frere, 26 March 1876; same to Rawlinson, 28 March 1876, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/1.

163. Hansard, 1877, CCXXXII, 3rd Series, 11 June 1877, cc.564-66.

164. G.of I. to S.of S., no.13, secret, 10 May 1877, I.O.Political and Secret Records; Pelly Papers(uncatalogued).

of a continental Indian defence policy.[165] He was no mere amanuensis, but the military architect of a concept that took over thirty years fully to materialise. "That Colley is a first rate soldier," wrote Lytton, "is acknowledged with warmth by all the best men in the Army, and all those who have served with him, under him, or over him, in the field. But he is really a great deal more than this. I have rarely met in any man such a remarkable genius for organisation of all kinds, an intellect so clear and keen, or so judicial a head. Had he not been a soldier he might have been a great lawyer; and in any profession I think he would certainly have come to the front."[166] Of Colley's remarkable "Memorandum on the Military Aspects of the Central Asian Question" - the charter of Lytton's and all future Indian military policy - his biographer has justly observed that "no more comprehensive view of this immense theatre of operations has ever been grouped into the

165. At Supreme Council discussions of military policy, wrote Chamberlain, "Colonel Colley is always present....but sits away and says nothing. I feel all the time that he has given the Viceroy the key to the discourse, and is his real military mentor." G.W.Forrest, Life of Field-Marshal Sir Neville Chamberlain, London, Blackwoods, 1909, p.485. It is clear from allusions in Lytton's correspondence, and the wealth of military detail it contains that Colley, as Military Secretary and later as Private Secretary, framed if not wrote the Merv and other demi-official letters and despatches. According to Eden, one of the reasons why the Simla Commission Report remained unpublished for so long was because Colley had left India before "preparing a draft of it." Eden to Northbrook, 31 May 1880, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/15. See also Butler's Life of Maj.-General Sir George Pomeroy Colley, London, 1899.

166. Lytton to Cranbrook, pte, 28 October 1879, Cranbrook Papers, T501/49-54; Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/4.

compass of a single document."[167]

Basing himself upon a critical examination of Romanoffski's and Roberts' plans in terms of recent Prussian theory and experience of frontier strategy and warfare, Colley argued that India could only be defended by vigorous offensive operations along the line of the Oxus based upon a scientifically reconstituted mountain frontier which, commanding the debouches on both sides of the passes, shattered the parapet screening the enemy movements and points of concentration and attack, combined at once the features of a "central bastion-like salient" - allowing unhindered concentration of force along lateral lines of communication, - and of an offensive base providing facilities for a "well-planned counter-stroke and extra quickness of movement." Cabul therefore rather than Herat or Merv constituted the true key to the defence of India. Although the future pivots of Romanoffski's plan and of considerable moral significance, their strategical importance was illusory and overestimated: while useful as defensive control centres of insurrectionary warfare, they were too exposed, too indefensible and too far removed from Indian sources of military power to serve as bases for offensive operations. Colley was therefore reluctant "tp see the fate of a campaign, involving possibly our hold on India," risked in a decisive battle for the western theatre where Russia, in terms of communications and troops, and connected to the arterial lines of Caucasian military power, would be at a

167. "Memorandum on the Military Aspect of the Central Asian Question," Col. Colley, 7 June 1876, IO.Political and Secret Records, Misc., C24.

distinct advantage. The occupation of Cabul however was a singularly different proposition. Defensively entrenched behind a rampart of mountains, and with its communications unassailable, Cabul directly closed the shortest and strategically most feasible group of approaches to India. Offensively, it threatened almost every point on Russia's extended frontier: on the right, Yarkand; in the centre, Khokan, Khojend, Samarkand and Bokhara; on the left, Merv and the frontier towns of Persia. In contrast with this strong and compact position, Russia presented "a singularly weak and vulnerable frontier, a disjointed line of nearly 1000 miles, assailable at almost every point, offering no commanding positions, and divided into two spheres, the eastern, the most exposed and the most weakly garrisoned, entirely isolated from the western, where alone Russia can utilise her great military resources." This central sphere of operations in which the relative strategical positions of Russia and England in Central Asia were reversed and of which Cabul formed the pivot, "should, if possible, be selected for our battlefield." The general character of Indian military policy and operations was therefore clear: to launch a vigorous offensive insurrectionary movement northward into the Khanates towards the Russian headquarters in Turkestan spear-headed by small lightly-equipped and highly mobile expeditionary forces under enterprising commanders moving by the Khyber and Kurram Passes onward beyond Cabul. The effect was to be more moral than material; and a revolving door effect was to be encouraged by simultaneously assuming a defensive posture westward towards Herat and Candahar. Hitherto, the whole of Colley's military

policy had been founded on the assumption of an Afghan alliance; but he was careful to consider the alternative. Deprecating the building of a counter-poise in Persia, Beluchistan or Western Afghanistan as "mistaken...dangerous and sacrificial" to "the enormous strength of a central compact position" while engaging on distant eccentric lines of operation between which there could be no practical co-operation and which allowed Russia to bear down from "Cabul on the heart of our Indian Empire," Colley insisted that "there is one, and only one course really open to us, and that is to occupy Cabul...it is the only way to save India." While such an "extreme step" was regrettable, it could not "too clearly" be kept in view that the occupation of Cabul "whether as an ally or conqueror, must be our answer to any Russian advance beyond the Oxus, and make our preparations accordingly."

Colley's policy was bound to raise serious and disturbing questions, for it ran counter to the grain of conservative Indian military opinion and tradition (which contemplated after the fashion of Hamley and Mitchell defeating the Russians as they debouched onto the Punjabi plains, or at most in a decisive battle for Herat or Merv) and postulated for the Indian army a strategical role to which little thought had previously been given, and for which in terms of intelligence, a centralised and responsive frontier administration, and a unified high command and rapidly expansive military organisation, that army was singularly ill-equipped to handle. Lytton and Colley were astute enough to recognise the formidable catalogue of difficulties that reared up at their radical choice of

policy, and immediately set about to mitigate or eliminate them. They placed the combined weight of their authority behind MacGregor, Collen and Roberts in reversing the intelligence policy of previous viceroyalties, regulating the invidious system by which each Presidency was responsible for its own intelligence and operational plans, encouraging and systematising the process of military exploration, and, after examining Colonel Home and the workings of the British Intelligence Department, establishing an Indian Army counterpart, responsible, with the Railway Commission and Permanent Defence Committee, for the preparation of maps, contingency plans and mobilisation schemes "for the rapid commencement and vigorous prosecution of war in any direction" on or beyond the borders of India.[168] They amplified Sir Henry Durand's plea that "one Government, one policy, one command should watch over the frontier from the sea-board to Peshawur," and recommended that Wolseley (who had recently become Military Member of the Home Council, had aspirations to the Commander-in-Chiefship of India,[169] and had lately

168. "Formation of an Intelligence Department in India," Roberts to Burne, no.196, 6 May 1876; Burne to Q.M.G., no.198, 1 September 1876; Roberts to Burne, no.199, 30 October 1876, IMP, vols.954 and 958; "Confidential Report of Committee on the Formation of an Intelligence Department," encl. in MacGregor to Burne, no.1406, 20 December 1877, IMP, vol.1364; WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0721, "Report on the Intelligence Branch," Appdx. II and III, pp.129-36; "Minute on the Intelligence Department," Notes and Minutes, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/520/1; Lytton to Cranbrook, 15 July 1878; Cranbrook Papers, T501/48; Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/4; Cranbrook to Lytton, no.31, 23 June 1879, encl. in no.1420, IMP, vol.1364.

169. Hardy to Wolseley, 31 October 1876, WFP; Hardy to Disraeli, pte, 28 November 1876, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/118; Wolseley to R.Wolseley, 4 November 1876, WFP.

submitted a memorandum to Hardy and Disraeli advocating an identical military policy to that of Colley),[170] be brought from England and given supreme military and political power over a consolidated frontier.[171] Finally, while railways, weapons of precision and increasing native loyalty had enormously enhanced the efficacy of the British military grip upon India, these developments had not been sufficiently exploited by any "great structural" reforms in the High Command, organisation and administration so necessary to focus and direct the full power of India's military resources in a confrontation with Russia. Colley therefore, in a "very masterly paper", recommended "a complete re-organisation of our whole military establishment in India" - involving the abolition of the three Presidential Armies and High Commands and their amalgamation into four Army Corps based on a system of localisation, and supported by an Indian Army reserve - on the basis of a more realistic appreciation of the conflicting elements of efficiency, economy and security.[172]

These recommended policies and measures, so admirably suited to the structure of the Indian military system and the Continental approach to war that it was bound to adopt, yet so far ahead of their time, were calculated to raise huge objections from Salisbury, the Home Council, and the

170. "Memorandum on the Eastern Question," 10 November 1876, WOP, W17.

171. Lytton to Salisbury, pte, 30 July 1876, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/1.

172. Same to same, 1 April 1876; same to Northbrook, 6 April 1876; same to Rawlinson, pte, 5 August 1876; "Note by Col. Colley," Lytton Papers, ibid.

Viceroy's official military advisers. Disraeli's request in October 1876 that the Viceroy prepare "to strike a rapid and decisive blow at the heart of the Russian power in Central Asia...and raise the populations against her"[173] soon resulted in a deadlock over strategical policy - Lytton favouring Colley's interpretation,[174] Salisbury, Haines and Norman advocating Roberts' plan.[175] Sandeman's mission to Khelat, Colley's reconnaissance and the eventual occupation of Quetta as a base of intelligence and insurrectionary warfare in western Afghanistan, Biddulph's mission to Kashgar, and the cautious collection of a light expeditionary force in the Kurram Valley "to support diplomatic representations to important frontier states", or "to make a timely military demonstration in case of need," and even the proposal to reconstitute the Indian Navy[176] were grossly

173. Lytton to Salisbury, pte, 25 and 28 October 1876, Lytton Papers, ibid.

174. Salisbury to Lytton, pte, 2 June and 4 August 1876; Lytton to Haines, pte, 10 December 1876; Lytton to Norman, pte, 22 November and 6 December 1876, Lytton Papers, ibid.

175. "Confidential Memorandum on Possible Military Operations beyond our Trans-Indus Frontier," H.W.Norman, 2 December 1876, Lytton Papers, ibid.

176. Lytton to Salisbury, 14 April 1876; same to Norman, 22 November and 6 December 1876; same to Haines, pte, 10 December 1876; same to Carnarvon, Lytton Papers, ibid; Colley to Wolseley, 23 May 1878, WFP; "Proposed occupation of a Military Position on the Kurram border," nos.183-90, confdl, 25 November 1876, vol.951; "Provision of carriage and supplies for the force preparing for field service on the North-West Frontier," confdl, 13 December 1876, vol.953, IMP; G.of I. to S.of S., no.50, political, 23 March 1877, Political and Secret Letters from India; same to same, no.10, 7 April 1876, Military and Marine Despatches from India.

misconstrued by Salisbury and the Home Council as being manifestations of Lytton's "warlike dreams to prevent the annexation of Central Asia," and of his "burning anxiety to distinguish himself in a great war,"[177] whereas they were simply watchful precautions against continued Russian intrigue in Afghanistan. As to the appointment of a Frontier Commissioner, Salisbury believed Wolseley "knew India little or not at all,"[178] whose appointment would be regarded as "an announcement of a campaign in Central Asia."[179] While Disraeli agreed in principle that the North-West Frontier "should have a military Government if possible," he had been unimpressed with the self-assertive "impulsive and dashing" character of Wolseley's memorandum, and doubted the prudence of Wolseley's appointment. "If he were in India, & on service, it would be natural. To send for him, like an eminent counsel with a special retainer...would attract general notice & lead to much misapprehension. Are there no other Sir G.W.'s not so celebrated or notorious? Surely the Duke of Cambridge & his counsellors must have their eyes on some rising officers in case of great

177. Salisbury to Beaconsfield, pte, 31 October 1876, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ce/202/274; same to Derby, confdl, 21 June 1877, bound vol., 'Letters from Salisbury,' Derby Papers.

178. Same to Lytton, pte, 14 August 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/2.

179. Same to Beaconsfield, pte, 30 August 1876, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ce/202/271.

contingencies."[180] Finally, deferring to what appeared to him "the dominant and best-supported military opinion" of Northbrook, Napier and Norman, Salisbury and the Home Council, indirectly supported by Haines and the Duke of Cambridge, rejected Lytton's proposals for army reform as cutting across all the accepted canons of internal security and curtailing the power and independence of the Presidencies. "My own judgement so far as I dare to form one on the great mysteries of military structure," wrote Salisbury, "is in favour of encouraging variety to the greatest possible extent. In a military Empire mutiny is our one great danger, compared to which all other dangers are trivial... and therefore I should like to see the Army built in mutiny-tight compartments."[181] This reluctance on the part of Salisbury, the Home Council, and to a lesser degree the Cabinet, to support the policy that Lytton had been expressly

180. Beaconsfield to Salisbury, confdl, 3 September 1876, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Beaconsfield,' Salisbury Papers; Hardy to Beaconsfield, pte, 28 November 1876, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/118; Beaconsfield to Hardy, 30 November 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/266. Wolseley described the reaction of the Cabinet to this memorandum somewhat more dramatically: "My paper was sent to Dizzy who read it & by whom I presume orders were given to have it suppressed - I was only given one copy myself & the type was broken up to prevent further copies being struck off. You shall see it some day. It was to the point & recommended strong measures, both in Bulgaria & in Central Asia & gave all the rough outline of both campaigns including calculations - all rough of time & distances, showing how completely Russia was at our mercy on the Oxus - Don't mention the fact that I have ever written such a paper." Wolseley to R.Wolseley, 7 January 1877; Thompson to Wolseley, 30 November 1876, WFP.

181. Salisbury to Lytton, pte, 4 August 1876, Lytton Papers, ibid.

commissioned to discharge was rooted partly in the Cabinet's fixation for Balkan affairs grotesquely exaggerated by Gladstone's atrocity campaign, partly in Salisbury's descension to the lowest levels of Russophilism, but mainly in the Cabinet's hypnosis by the talisman of Constantinople's strategical indispensability, and the amphibious character of British military policy.

CHAPTER II.

COLONEL HOME'S MISSION TO CONSTANTINOPLE,

AUGUST 1876 - MARCH 1877.

"Constantinople is the key to India," Disraeli once told Lord Barrington, "and not Egypt and the Suez Canal."[1] In this uncompromising remark, possessed of all the hypnotic power of axiom, lies the clue to an understanding of Disraeli's approach to the 'defence of India' question, and the nub of the strategic debate between Whitehall and Simla that was decisively to shape the course of British defence policy over the next four years. The outbreak of the Balkan crisis in 1875, the strategical centre of gravity shifted from Central Asia to Europe. From this moment, the security of Constantinople became the critical focal point, the fixed principle against which all plans and projects for the security of other strategic points were judged; and the military history of the Eastern crisis is the history of how far this principle came to be modified.

Although Disraeli repeatedly emphasised his determination not to drift into another Crimean War,[2] and although the defence of Constantinople was shortly to become the touchstone of his Eastern military policy, it does not appear that he associated the early insurrectionary movements in the Balkans with Fadeef's and Danilevski's remarks that such revolts were the necessary prelude to the great war and the occupation of Bulgaria and Constantinople by which alone Russia's "cultural ailments" could be cured and her "Pan-Slavist sympathies" could be satisfied. At least until toward the end of September 1876, he hopefully

1. Memorandum by Lord Barrington, 23 October 1876, cited in G.E.Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, London, Murray, 1920, 6 vols., VI, p.83.

2. Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield, 29 May 1876; The Marquis of Zetland(ed.), The Letters of Disraeli to Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield, London, Benn, 1929, 2 vols., II, p.49.

regarded the Turkish troubles simply as a civil war which could be kept localised through the combined and vigorous diplomatic efforts of the European powers.[3] But the Servian invasion of Turkey and the 'unofficial' war waged by Pan-Slavist Russian volunteers in their awkward implications brought the probability of a general war much closer. In his despatches and letters from St. Petersburg, Loftus had drawn attention to the "increasing Slav fever" and the growing public enthusiasm for the Servian cause; he predicted that "notwithstanding Russian neutrality every physical and financial aid will be given to the Servians - in short there will be a Russian army of volunteers fighting in disguise under the Servian colours;" and he warned that "the flame of religious enthusiasm for the Christians" was "favoured by the Empress and immediate circle of the Court" and that only "collective Europe may stay the hand of war, and prevent its extension."[4] If Serbian forces suffered a series of defeats or were decisively broken in the field, and Turkey sought the legitimate consequences of victory, there could be no telling what the Russian Government would do to re-assert Pan-Slav prestige;[5] on the other hand, a Servian victory supported by Russia might ignite the combustible material prepared by Ignatiev, resulting in a widespread insurrection throughout and the ultimate dissolution

3. Hansard, CCXXII, 1876, 3rd series, 31 July 1876; see Buckle, Life, VI, p.39.

4. Loftus to Derby, pte, 16 August 1876, bound vol., 'Letters from Lord Loftus,' Derby Papers; nos.368 and 369, 23 August 1876; no.376, 27 August 1876, PRO/FO 65/939.

5. Disraeli to Derby, confdl, 28 June 1876, bound vol., 'Letters from Lord Beaconsfield,' Derby Papers.

of the Ottoman Empire.[6] Elliot was therefore instructed "to point out to the Porte the extreme importance of accepting an early armistice and restoring peace." "If hostilities continue, interference of some of the Powers seems probable and the consequences might be fatal to the Turkish Empire."[7] Derby probably felt it unnecessary to point out to Elliot that he might read British for Turkish; but the question of taking further measures, diplomatic or military, openly intended to encourage or coerce Turkey to continue to act as an effective strategic buffer against Russian encroachment had been much complicated by the publication of the first lurid accounts of the Bulgarian atrocities, disclosures which, vindictively exploited by Gladstone to divide the country and cabinet against themselves, tended to conceal the real strategic issues at stake, and gave Russia the opportunity of taking a tougher line towards Turkey in the event of the latter's refusal to accept a Servian armistice.[8] "I think it right to mention for your guidance," Derby informed Elliot, "that the impression produced here by events in Bulgaria has completely destroyed sympathy with Turkey. The feeling is universal and so strong that even if Russia were to declare war against the Porte, H.M.G. would find it practically impossible to intervene. Any such event would place England in a most unsatisfactory position."[9]

6. Disraeli to Queen Victoria, 29 January 1876, PRO/CAB 41/7.

7. Derby to Elliot, no.524A, 25 August 1876, PRO/FO 78/2451.

8. Disraeli to Hardy, most confdl, 30 September 1876; cited in A.E.Hardy, Gathorne Hardy, First Earl of Cranbrook, London, Murray, 1910, 2 vols., I, p.372; Cairns to Hardy, confdl, 16 September 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/262.

9. Derby to Elliot, tlgm, 27 August 1876, PRO/FO 78/2451.

The most damaging consequence of increased Russian pressure and British inability to intervene, in Elliot's opinion, was that the Turks, feeling themselves defenceless and abandoned, would in desperation revert to the policy of Unkiar Skelessi: in that event, an independent British occupation of Constantinople or naval demonstration to protect British interests could not be made "without great danger."[10]

The seeming inevitability of a Russo-Turkish war confronted Disraeli with the difficulty of obtaining "accurate and ample" information concerning the respective military resources and objectives of the Turkish and Russian armies which might serve as a basis for determining the nature and extent of Britain's future military policy. From the start, he had felt poorly served not only by the Foreign Office at home, but also by his ambassadors abroad at the various European capitals who had earned his well-known sardonic strictures for failing either adequately to interpret British policy to their respective governments or to furnish prompt and reliable information.[11] Although it is now clear that these criticisms and the loss of confidence implied were in large measure unjustified,[12] they served to underline one particular difficulty of Disraeli's position; namely,

10. Elliot to Derby, cypher tlgm, 4 October 1876, PRO/FO 78/2477.

11. Disraeli to Derby, 20 April; confdl, 15 May, 14 July, 7 and 15 August 1876, bound vol., 'Letters from Lord Beaconsfield,' Derby Papers.

12. In the Derby Papers there is a long exculpatory memorandum by Tenterden concerning the Foreign Office, Elliot and the Bulgarian atrocities. See also B.H.Sumner, "Lord Augustus Loftus and the Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878," Cambridge Historical Journal, IV, no.3, 1934, pp.283-93.

that in attempting to formulate a realistic strategical appraisal of the Eastern situation, and assure Parliament of a consistent and reasonable policy, he felt hampered in having to rely upon the judgement and advice of ministers and officials whom he felt were insufficiently impressed with the seriousness of the crisis at hand. Even Wellesley's reports, laced with draughts from secret sources, were clothed in a curious and disconcerting ambiguity, his conclusions plainly tugging against the bald reported facts. As early as October 1875, he had been forwarding intelligence of the highest military importance which had been "more than corroborated by the assurances of an officer of the Russian War Office...whose duties are closely connected with the mobilisation of the Army and the general movement of troops:" a new department had been created at the Russian War Office expressly charged with mobilisation arrangements in the southern military districts of Kiev, Odessa and Caucasus which had been placed on a war footing; there were large troop concentrations at Alexandropol; the Mobilisation Committee was investigating the war-readiness of the Russian armies; and Ignatiev had been ordered to ascertain and report upon the state and disposition of the Turkish army.[13] At the same time, he maintained that "Russia has no immediate object in view" and "that seeing the unsettled state of Europe and the possibility of eventually being drawn into war, the Russian Government feel it their

13. See for example Wellesley to Derby, no.59, 10 November; no.67, secret, 24 November; no.72, secret, 8 December; no.75, most confdl, 14 December 1875; no.10, confdl, 22 April; no.18, confdl, 12 September; no.19, secret, 14 September; no.29, confdl, 26 September 1876, 'Letterbooks of Col. Fred. Wellesley,' Cowley Papers, PRO/FO 519/124.

duty to make preparations without the slightest idea of breaking the peace." "I do not believe Russia is dreaming of going to war," he wrote as late as 26 September, "she knows how weak she is from a military and financial point of view, but is too delighted if anyone will think her strong - in fact she is glad to bark because she is afraid to fight."[14] The troop concentrations at Alexandropol (which had been confirmed by the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs to Elliot)[15] were simply frontier "cordon troops," for "defensive and not offensive action," to subdue Kurdish border raids likely to break out as Turkish troops were withdrawn to Servia. Moreover, the absence from St. Petersburg of the Emperor, Prince Gortchakoff and the officer responsible for mobilisation; the briskness of trade in the southern districts; the lack of extraordinary activity in the arsenals and factories was additional evidence of the unwarlike intentions of Russia. "War means financial ruin to Russia," Wellesley concluded his despatch of 26 September, "I do not believe the present Emperor of Russia is a man to rush headlong, in an unprepared state, into a war, which would compromise the work of a whole reign."[16] Loftus supported this view:[17] "there is...a wholesome fear of us," he wrote privately to Derby, "which I can understand by the total want of preparation of the Country for War.

14. Ibid.

15. Elliot to Derby, cypher tlgm, 22 August 1876, PRO/FO 78/2475.

16. Wellesley to Derby, no.29, confdl, 26 September 1876, Cowley Papers, PRO/FO 519/124.

17. Loftus to Derby, 7 June 1876, Derby Papers.

They have no money. No fleet worth mentioning - an army in a state of reorganisation - To mobilise they require about 80,000 horses....They have no Ambulances, no Commissariat - nothing prepared for the movement of an Army. They are for Peace because they are afraid of the risks of war and it would be viewed here as a dire calamity."

One of the results of this ambiguity was to produce differences of opinion within the Cabinet over the most likely course of Russian action and the measures that Britain should adopt if Constantinople were threatened. It was recognised, however, that Wellesley was almost the only professional source of intelligence in the East, and that his observations were necessarily limited to the Imperial Court. Over the summer of 1876, therefore, the Cabinet and War Office attempted to widen their intelligence system: largely at the Duke of Cambridge's urgings soldiers were appointed to the Consul-Generalships of Warsaw and Bucharest to report on "the Military movements in Russia;"[18] Major M.S.Gonne was appointed military attache to Vienna to assess the capabilities of the Austrian armies for offensive warfare;[19] Captain (later Maj.-General Sir) J.C. Ardagh and Maj.-General Sir Arthur Kemball (the acting High Commissioner to the Ottoman Armies) were despatched as observers to the Turkish armies operating in the field against Servia;[20]

18. Cambridge to Hardy, 29 July 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/268; Hardy to Derby, 27 and 28 June 1876, bound vol., 'Letters from Hardy;' Derby to Hardy, 9 and 30 August 1876, 'Letters(dfts.) to Hardy, Hunt and Smith,' Derby Papers. Derby to Elliot, dft, no.556, 14 September 1876, PRO/FO 78/2451.

19. Hardy to Derby, 26 June 1876, ibid.

20. Derby to Elliot, nos.490 and 494, 9 and 10 August 1876, PRO/FO 78/2451.

Captain F.C.H.Clarke of the Intelligence Branch travelled to Russia, ostensibly "to represent the Royal Geographical Society at the approaching Congress of Orientalists at St. Petersburg," but in fact to reconnoitre the southern military districts of Kiev, Odessa and Caucasus;[21] finally, the Assistant-Quarter-Master-General of the Indian Army, Colonel (later Maj.-General Sir) C.M.MacGregor was encouraged by Salisbury to return to India by way of Kars and Erzeroum and "report on Armenia as a theatre of war."[22]

Not until late October however did intelligence of any quality begin to arrive from the prospective theatres of war, and the members of the Cabinet, scattered as they were throughout the country homes of England, Scotland and France, were compelled to decide and act in the light of those diplomatic sources of intelligence with which they expressed almost unanimous discontent. The War Minister's particular appeals to the Foreign Office for information as to "what is going on so far as we are concerned in the East" had been for the most part ignored.[23] "I am in a state of complete ignorance," he wrote Cairns on 14 September,[24] "The printed telegrams come so late that the

21. Derby to Loftus, no.421, 30 July 1876, PRO/FO 65/933.

22. Memorandum by Lt.-Col. C.M.MacGregor, A.Q.M.G. on Armenia as a Theatre of War, 15 December 1876, loose papers, Roberts Papers; Lady MacGregor(ed.), The Life and Opinions of Maj.-General Sir C.M.MacGregor, London, Blackwood, 1888, 2 vols., II, pp.28-31.

23. Hardy to Derby, 27 August 1876, Derby Papers.

24. Hardy to Cairns, 29 August and 14 September 1876, Cairns Papers, vol.7.

business is in a new phase when you are conning over the old one." The Lord Chancellor agreed,[25] and urged Hardy, together with Northcote and Carnarvon, to press Disraeli for an immediate Cabinet to clear the air and end the "muddle" which Carnarvon believed had resulted from "too much dualism...and the combination of spirited and do-nothing policies."[26] While respecting the "anxiety and uneasiness" of his colleagues, Disraeli rejected the demands for an early Cabinet on the grounds that "to have called them together unnecessarily, would have injured us much on the Continent, and even at home have given the impression that we were frightened and perplexed."[27] He felt that Cairns was "misconceiving the course which Lord Derby is taking," pointing out that his "great object" in pursuing an armistice "has never been to admit that we have changed our policy, or that we had adopted the views of the Opposition." He was therefore opposed to any idea that "in concert with the other European powers...we should force Turkey to a reasonable peace with all the existing combatants,"[28] and refused to believe, as Salisbury would have it, "that the traditional Palmerstonian policy is at an end" or that if the Ottoman Empire were to be allowed to live, it must be

25. Cairns to Hardy, confdl, 16 September 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/262.

26. Carnarvon to Hardy, pte and personal, 12 September 1876; pte and confdl, 17 September 1876, ibid.

27. Disraeli to Salisbury, confdl, 26 September 1876, bound vol., 'Letters from Lord Beaconsfield,' Salisbury Papers.

28. Disraeli to Cairns, confdl, 23 September 1876, Cairns Papers, vol.7.

with drawn teeth.[29] All were agreed however that should the armistice negociations fail or Russia make some threatening gesture the complexion of affairs would be radically altered.[30]

The immediate crisis arose with Russia's unexpected suggestion that she occupy Bulgaria, a manoevre that would give her control of indispensable resources preparatory to an advance on Constantinople. Henceforth all planning - military and diplomatic - was based on the assumption that "somehow or other, European Turkey will be invaded."[31] The Cabinet which only a few days before Disraeli had felt so unnecessary was now summoned: it was summoned that he might unite it. "After a good deal of discussion,"[32] it was agreed to reject the Russian proposals for occupation and coercion, increase pressure on Turkey to accept an armistice, and finally "if Russia occupies Bulgaria...we to occupy Constantinople." Salisbury afterwards doubted whether Derby had really assented to the occupation of Constantinople "but all the rest were against him, especially Great Cat, who was very much for action. Universal feeling in favour of adequate securities."[33] Disraeli's most significant step

29. Salisbury to Carnarvon, 23 September 1876, Carnarvon Papers, PRO/30/6/8; Salisbury to Disraeli, 23 September 1876, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ce/202.

30. Disraeli to Cairns, confdl, 23 September 1876, Cairns Papers, vol.7.

31. Disraeli to Derby, pte, 30 September 1876, Derby Papers.

32. Salisbury to Carnarvon, 5 October 1876, Carnarvon Papers, PRO/30/6/8.

33. Ibid.

however had been taken four days earlier (30 September) in a private letter to Hardy.[34] Referring to his decision "to occupy Constantinople till the termination of the war as a 'material guarantee'," he asked Hardy to explore the implications and "make enquiries as to our readiness in certain contingencies." "On the water side all is easy," he wrote, "but how about the land side? You must have in your Archives at the War Office large materials on the subject, probably all sufficient. What are the fortifications there? What force required to hold them and others that might be erected? I shd. think 40,000 men wd. do. Surely we cd. manage that, notwithstanding the furor of the movement."

Replying immediately to Disraeli late the same night, Hardy felt confident "that everything necessary is known in the Int. Dept.," and would "quietly make enquiries...and write to you again when I have the information which you need."[35] But the situation in terms of what was known about Turkish military resources and the operational readiness of the Army was, as could be expected, scarcely encouraging. "There is no strength in works, in Constantinople," wrote the Adjutant-General, Sir Richard Airey, "but it has been estimated that it would require 20,000 men to Garrison & defend it, but it would also require an Army in the Field, the strength of which can only be estimated according to

34. Disraeli to Hardy, most confdl, 30 September 1876; Hardy, Memoir, I, p.373; Private Diary, 1 October 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

35. Hardy to Disraeli, confdl, 30 September 1876, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/129.

ulterior objects:"[36]

Taking it for granted that all the necessary sea transport were ready at their Stations, say, Cork, Dublin, Portsmouth, Plymouth & Dover, a force of 36,000 men, could be embarked in 3 weeks, after the issue of orders, but the equipment of such a Force would be purely "Personal" - as the Soldiers stand on Parade, and Cavalry & Artillery as on March route. Of the vast stores of all kinds, we on this side of the House, technically know little, but from what I am able to collect, we are in want of very much, if operations of any kind, were projected. Waggons of many kinds, Harness, Saddlery, Horse shoes, Ambulances, Medical Store Carts, Ammunition wagons, Carts for Regimental Reserve Ammunition, very large supplies of Clothing, all require very much and immediate looking into....

Colonel Home's immediate reaction to Disraeli's request was to telegraph the Ambassador at Constantinople to detain Captain Ardagh in the East "to report on a defensive position in advance of Constantinople" and examine landing places along the northern coast of the Sea of Marmara "as advanced posts to take in flank any advance of an enemy along the Peninsula."[37] At the same time, Home had the Intelligence Branch prepare three papers[38] which together constituted a comprehensive appreciation of the probable

36. Airey to Hardy, pte, 11 October 1876, 'Miscellaneous,' Cranbrook Papers, T501/63.

37. Home to Elliot, no.622, dft, confdl, 7 October 1876, PRO/FO 78/2451; Home to Ardagh, 9 October 1876, Ardagh Papers, PRO/30/40/1.

38. WO Confdl Paper 0621, 'The Steps which Russia would take should she determine to occupy the Principalities in the Spring,' Capt. F.C.H.Clarke; WO Confdl Paper 0622, 'Memorandum on the Probable Course of Action which would be adopted by the Russians in the event of their attempting to occupy Bulgaria and march on Constantinople,' Capt. E.Baring; WO Confdl Paper 0636, 'The Steps that Russia would probably take in the event of her advancing against Turkey in Asia in the Spring;' WOP, W22; Cromer Papers, PRO/30/6/16; PRO/WO 33/26.

state of Turkish defences in Europe and Asia, the most likely course of Russian strategy in Bulgaria and Armenia, and the counter-measures which Britain should adopt. He explained that the urgency with which these reports were required had precluded his making use of the voluminous "collection of road reports and other papers, compiled during the period immediately preceding the expedition to the Crimea," and that "the absence of adequate and reliable statistics" made it impossible to arrive at any conclusion "which could be considered completely trustworthy." As an indication of the utter paucity of first-hand intelligence, he felt compelled to rely heavily upon Chesney's and Moltke's authoritative accounts of former Russo-Turkish wars (published over twenty years previously), and the Military Opinions of Sir John Burgoyne supplemented by what could be gathered from Wellesley's despatches, consular reports, travel-books and recent periodical literature. These reports, completed on 16 October, reached Hardy in printed form probably on 17 or 18 October; they were submitted to Disraeli on 19 October.[39]

The neutrality of Austria, a war on two fronts in the traditional fashion, British or Turkish command of the Black Sea, and some form of British military intervention were assumed as pre-conditions. Neither the Pruth, the Danube nor the Russo-Turkish Asiatic frontier were considered to possess much intrinsic defensive strength; the Roumanian and Turkish armies were expected to offer little effective opposition along these lines; and it was anticipated that Russia would mobilise the whole military force in the districts

39. Hardy to Disraeli, confdl note, 19 October 1876, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/131.

of Kiev, Odessa and Kharkov (160,000 infantry, 15,500 cavalry and 630 guns) and would occupy Roumania within a month. Russian strategy both in Europe and Asia would aim at masking the principal Turkish fortresses and at striking rapidly towards Constantinople and Erzeroum; Turkish strategy should therefore aim at concentrating their field armies in entrenched camps behind the Balkan and Soghanli Ridges, defeating the Russians in detail as they debouched from the mountain passes, much in the same way as Napoleon had defeated the Italians. "To an active commander with an army capable of rapid movement," ran the report, "a chain of mountains is a source of great strength as a means of defence," but "to a feeble strategist commanding an inefficient army they afford but little real help." It was considered "at best more than doubtful" whether the Turks unaided by allies could prosecute such a difficult mountain strategy, and it was felt that the intervention of 50,000 British-Indian troops operating from Varna, Burgas, Batoum or Trezibond on the Black Sea, from Alexandretta or from the Persian Gulf, and supported where possible by the fleet, would "materially alter the condition of affairs." Such support would assure the Turks of the security of Constantinople against a coup de main, and stimulate them actively to defend the Balkan and Soghanli mountains; by compelling the Russians to cross the higher inland mountain ranges, valuable time would be gained to withdraw and concentrate the field armies behind, and artificially to improve the mountain defences. Failing this, the British force might confine itself to defeating the Russians, as Belisarius had defeated the Bulgarians in 559, by developing the "little Balkan" line north of

Constantinople into a "second Torres Vedras," and renovating the decayed Anglo-French line at Bulair to protect the Dardanelles. Two courses therefore seemed open to England "if there is any idea of our engaging in war with Russia... and it be decided to afford aid - military and naval - to Turkey. The first is to take the offensive, and endeavour with an Anglo-Turkish force, to defeat the Russians in the field." Militarily, there could be no doubt of Britain's capacity "to undertake so bold a course:"

> We have money, a loyal population (I don't believe there would be much difficulty in keeping Ireland quiet), and a preponderating fleet. The Russians are impecunious; they have troubles at home; and their fleet is comparatively weak. Then they have a very superior military force. What could we do in this respect? Most people think 50,000 men our maximum effort. I believe we could do a great deal more. Supposing this were done: draft all the Army Reserve and Militia Reserve into the Army; call out the Militia; garrison all England, the greater part of Ireland, and the Mediterranean fortresses, with Militia; if necessary, call out the Volunteers; send the whole British Army abroad; take 5,000 English and 15,000 Native troops from India. We should then be able to put 120,000 men in the field, which, with money and officers given to the Turks, would, I believe, be quite enough to give the Russians a good dressing. I don't think they will be able to bring more than 200,000 men - if so many into Bulgaria, and they will have great difficulty in manoevring and supplying so large a force as this even.[40]

Should this course be adopted "then not a moment should be lost in sending properly qualified officers to obtain information on...(1) The actual condition of the principal Turkish fortresses...(2) The facilities which exist for crossing the Danube...and (3) The state of each

40. See also Baring to Northbrook, 20 October 1876, 'General Letters,' Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/7.

of the main roads...and the amount of supplies and transport which are available in the districts through which the roads pass."

Politically, the idea of general war with Russia was clearly objectionable and to be avoided if at all possible, and the passive defence of Constantinople as conceived by Burgoyne in 1854, though a much less glamorous military operation, was infinitely more preferable. But there were several drawbacks. What means were there for ensuring that the neutral character of the 'material guarantee' would be respected by both Turks and Russians? In the defence of a key strategical position such as a capital, who could say what passive defence meant? When does passive defence end and an active defence, which carries the risk of provocation and retaliation, begin? Since it was admitted that "naval aid alone" would no more keep the Russians out of Constantinople than "the operations of the French Fleet could keep the Prussians out of France," how could the passive defence of Constantinople prevent a Russian overland advance on Syria, Egypt or the Persian Gulf? All these questions suggested that "we have attached an undue importance to the possession of Constantinople - that we might get a quid pro quo somewhere else." Nevertheless, it was clear "that our prestige is involved to that extent that we simply cannot let the Russians quietly walk into Constantinople without making an effort to stop them." Engineer officers should therefore be sent "to lay out and prepare the lines for the defence of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles and to obtain information as to the roads, transport, supplies, etc., in the immediate neighbourhood of Constantinople."

Long before this report had been completed however the crisis had much deteriorated as a result of reports from St. Petersburg, Odessa, Belgrade and Constantinople of extensive Russian military preparations. On 15 October,[41] the Tsar approved of Obruchev's plan for the invasion of Turkey which he felt could be accomplished, much as the Intelligence Branch had predicted, by four army-corps within three to four months. Four days earlier, on 10 October, Wellesley had frantically telegraphed that a "great change" had taken place since he had last written, and that the Russian War Department were working "night and day...to prepare for immediate mobilisation the troops of the Southern military circles." The Minister of Finance had made available over thirty-four million roubles for war purposes, twelve million of which had already been spent on forage. All leave had been cancelled; and heavy coastal defence guns had been sent to Otchakoff, Kerch and Sebastopol. The Consul-General at Odessa had also telegraphed that 100,000 troops were concentrated at Poti and Alexandropol for the immediate invasion of Turkish Armenia with the object of capturing Smyrna, the largest commercial port in the Ottoman Empire. "There is a general uneasiness," Wellesley concluded, "and a conviction that war is inevitable."[42] The defeat of Turkey and the Russian occupation of Constantinople would

41. Sumner, Russia and Balkans, pp.217-8.

42. Wellesley to Derby, no.31, secret, 11 October 1876, Cowley Papers, PRO/FO 519/124; Loftus to Derby, tlgm, no.473, secret, 10 October 1876, PRO/FO 65/941; Elliot to Derby, no.1131, 10 October 1876, PRO/FO 78/2465; Loftus to Derby, pte, 11 October 1876, bound vol., 'Letters from Lord Loftus,' Derby Papers.

be the logical consequences of such a war, wrote Elliot,[43] and "it is not now too soon for other Powers to consider what measures may be necessary to guard against a contingency which may not be far off and which must affect their vital interests." Consul-General W.A.White at Belgrade urged as a start that a military attache should be sent to Constantinople to supply "HMG with accurage information on the power and resources of Turkey to resist a Russian military aggression by land," and that General Sir Lintorn Simmons should visit Turkey, as Burgoyne did in 1854, to consider "the question of defending Constantinople by means of the Fleet combined with a body of land troops and of earthworks on the European land side."[44]

Armed with all these reports and those of the Intelligence Branch at the Cabinet on 19 October, Disraeli was clearly shocked at the apathy of his colleagues and at their inability through sheer ignorance of or indifference to military details rationally to discuss any alternatives in policy to those recommended. The Times[45] had been more than magnanimous concerning the Cabinet's ability to prepare for war when it suggested that the Government had "called upon Lloyd's to supply instantly a list of sea-going steamers capable of conveying troops, and that contingent contracts for their hire" would be "forthwith entered into;" that Lord Napier had been "ordered to hold himself in readiness

43. Elliot to Derby, no.1190, 24 October 1876, PRO/FO 78/2466.

44. White to Tenterden, pte, 12 October 1876, Tenterden Papers, PRO/FO 363/4.

45. Times, 19 October 1876; cited in G.C.Thompson, Public Opinion and Lord Beaconsfield, 1875-1880, London, MacMillan, 1886, 2 vols., II, p.80.

at some convenient spot in the Mediterranean, from which he may at any moment be directed to proceed with troops to Egypt;" that confidential orders had been "given by the War Office to the Commander-in-Chief to hold three army-corps in readiness for immediate despatch to the Mediterranean;" that "plans for the defence of Constantinople, prepared by the Royal Engineers and approved by the War Office" had "been forwarded to the Admiral of the Fleet in Besika Bay;" and finally that "the Government had decided to call an Autumnal Session of Parliament." Such discussion as there was seems to have centred on the relative merits of occupying Constantinople or the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Northcote, fastidiously cautious and prone to see difficulties, probably voiced the general sentiment of the Cabinet when he confided privately to Hardy[46] that he thought the question "whether we ought to make any demonstration at all" should be "more fully discussed in Cabinet than it has yet been." He disliked "the Gallipoli scheme" as "a half-measure, which would involve us in a great deal of embarrassment, and would probably be quite ineffectual." An occupation of Constantinople would be "more to the purpose," but the objections "were very serious." "Neither idea," he wrote, "has been half discussed, and I feel the difficulty of discussing them hypothetically; but if that difficulty is felt even in Cabinet, how much more would it be felt in the House of Commons." The Prime Minister, however, disposed to take prudence and caution for timidity and inertia, was exasperated by the imperturbability of the Cabinet as a whole

46. Northcote to Hardy, pte, 24 October 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/271.

but especially by that of Derby who "hardly cared to consider the military elements of the question that absorbs all our thought." "We don't live in the times of Marshal Diebitsch, when his troops were exhausted, half famished, and diseased, by the time they had reached only the frontier," Disraeli wrote tartly to the Foreign Minister after the Cabinet,[47] "We live in the times of Odessa and Roumanian railways." He referred to Fadeef's plan "to settle the fate of European Turkey in spite of the maritime powers:"

> It is at the War Office, in their confidential archives, with a study by experts, assisted by all the secret intelligence from Wellesley as to position of troops, wh. appears always to have been accurate.
>
> From this, and other documents, all of wh. shd. be known to you, I conclude the invasion of European Turkey, and conquest of Constantinople may be rapid.
>
> If so, our determination as to our ultimate course cannot be too soon decided on. Constantinople occupied by the Russians, while the British Fleet was in Besika Bay, would be the most humiliating event, that has occurred to England, since the surrenders of Whitelocke and Burgoyne and Cornwallis, but infinitely in its consequences more important and disastrous.

Derby's rejoinder, as would be expected, was cool and deliberate. "My impression," he wrote, "is that the Russians are by no means in the state of readiness which you assume & that a dash at Constantinople is not their object. However I will not dispute that with you. But are you not taking for granted that their march will be practically unopposed? and is this likely? I do not think that immed. war is expected by any diplomatist - not that they are infallible...."[48]

47. Disraeli to Derby, confdl, 21 October 1876, Derby Papers.

48. Derby to Disraeli, pte, 22 October 1876, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/D/1173.

Late in the evening of 21 October, Disraeli appears to have received fresh information (the origin of which is discussed below) which greatly increased his anxiety, for writing to Derby the following day (Sunday, 22 October) he introduced new factors of likely Russian rates of advance into his arguments for more decisive action. He felt convinced that "after the passage of the Pruth, Russia may reach Constantinople in sixty days - at the most 64;" for the Danube, "from some of the strong places now being in Roumania and other causes, is no longer a barrier, and the crossing of the Balkans may be calculated almost to a nicety:"[49]

> Any possibility of defence under these circumstances depends upon Turkey possessing the command of the sea, as in that case the Russians would be deprived of their heavy artillery, their siege trains, which cannot pass the Balkans; but if a Russian squadron reaches the Black Sea and captures Varna her siege trains would then be at her disposal.
>
> Any movement on our part, whether we fortify the Peninsula by Lake Durkos or the Chersonese, would be sixteen days too late if delayed till the Russians cross the Balkan.

The most alarming feature of this situation, however, was "that Turkey, feeling she is utterly deserted, may make some mad compact with Russia, opening the Straits, and giving her complete control over the Asiatic shore." He had therefore "asked Hardy to come up tomorrow, that we may have the military details clear, and then after consultation of all three together, I think we ought to have a Cabinet...."

It was midnight (Saturday, 21/22 October) at Helmsted Park when Disraeli's agitated summons to London was delivered

49. Disraeli to Derby, confdl, 22 October 1876, Derby Papers.

to Hardy by special messenger.[50] He felt no need to remind his War Minister of the desirability of action, and dwelt on the constricting effects of the Cabinet's lack of information.[51] He "thought the Cabinet was terribly ill-informed when they met, on the grave issues before us. You & I were the only persons who knew anything, & that was, at least on my side, only an inkling." He then reproved Hardy for his absence from London in such critical times. "I don't think the Secy. of War shd. be away at this moment," he wrote, "I have wanted you 20 times. Can you come up on Monday 23 October? I shd. like to arrive at some conclusions with you before I see Lord Derby....His tone was not satisfactory to me, &, so far as I can judge, will not satisfy the country." He ended with the pregnant assertion that "the Crimean War mt. have been prevented by firmness on our part...."

Hardy replied immediately[52] professing that had he "had the least idea that you wished to see me," he would "of course have remained in London or at all events made arrangements to suit your convenience." But, he felt, it was "a waste of life to hang about in London without departmental work sufficient to occupy me and the rest I can do as well here as there." He agreed that "the Cabinet clearly wants definite views and with such knowledge as they weekly pick up from the F. Office telegrams I do not wonder at it. They have as yet no opinion on the question whether at all,

50. Private diary, 22 October 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

51. Disraeli to Hardy, 21 October 1876, ibid, T501/266.

52. Hardy to Disraeli, 21 October 1876, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/132.

or when or where this country should assume a warlike attitude. I have abstained from any open demonstration but I have given such orders as may make action more easy...."

Disquieted by evidence which seemed to point to an immediate, rapid and virtually unopposed invasion of Turkey, Hardy was endeavouring to obtain fuller information and advice through less official channels as to the practicability of a hasty occupation of the Dardanelles, a military operation that could be accomplished more quickly and with acceptably fewer troops than would be the case with Constantinople. He had told Disraeli when forwarding the Intelligence Branch appreciations on 19 October that they touched only "one part of the question," and that he was "going into the other at once."[53] The same day, he had written vigorously to his Private Secretary, Colonel H.G.Deedes, that "I shall want all possible information as to the land defences of the Dardanelles. Sir Richard Airey thought there were papers of Burgoyne as to Constantinople but supposing we had a fleet in the Dardanelles and the land were in possession of an enemy what defences would we have....[54] What Turkish force is in Servia - What on the frontier of Montenegro? What available force beyond these armies & where. Would any land force be of any use in holding the Dardanelles at or near Gallipoli - What fortifications if any would be needed? Is there any officer on the spot who could tell - Whom would the QMG propose to send to consider the country

53. Same to same, confdl note, 19 October 1876, ibid, B/XX/Ha/131.

54. Hardy to Deedes, secret, 18 October 1876, 'Letters as Secretary of State for War,' Cranbrook Papers, T501/94.

behind Constantinople...."[55] The direct result of this private enquiry was that Colonel Home produced two secret memoranda which argued conclusively for the immediate occupation of Constantinople rather than the Dardanelles. These memoranda were probably delivered personally to Disraeli on Saturday evening, 21 October.[56]

In his first memorandum, Home assumed the Turkish or British command of the Black Sea, and the neutrality of Austria, either voluntarily imposed, or dictated by the fear of a Russo-Servian army operating against its flank. In the event of a Russo-Turkish war, he envisaged a probable British occupation of Constantinople either as a peace-keeping force "between Mussulmans & Christians in Rumelia," or as a garrison force "to protect Constantinople from Russian aggression." "In either case," he reasoned, "the British Army, far from its base of operations, England,

55. Same to same, secret, 19 October 1876, ibid.

56. Secret Memoranda, November 1876, 'Afghanistan Correspondence,' Hughenden MSS, B/XVIII/A/8b and 8c. Both memoranda are signed by Colonel Home. On pp.100-1 of Moneypenny and Buckle's Life of Disraeli reference is made to "an interesting manuscript" written partly in Disraeli's hand and partly in Corry's labelled "Nov 76. Notes for Cabinet Russo-Turkish Question." There follows a long quotation, allegedly from this manuscript. In fact, the Hughenden MSS., under the above-mentioned label, contain two quite distinct memoranda, one in Disraeli's hand on his usual writing paper, the other by Corry on quarto sheets. Without signification or reason, Moneypenny and Buckle have deleted large portions from the beginning and end of Disraeli's memorandum, and from the beginning of Corry's. It is plain, too, from the points and wording of Disraeli's memorandum that it is an abstract of Home's first memorandum. Furthermore, included in the box of Hardy's letters to Disraeli, is an undated Cabinet note, again in Disraeli's hand, which forms an abstract of Home's second memorandum. See Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/131a and XVI/B/62 and 71.

would have to seek and secure pied de terre, or point d'appui to serve as its base, where it could safely disembark, where its stores & depots could be formed, where its numerical inferiority might be compensated by advantages either natural or artificial or both, where it might return if pressed and where it might be at all times supported by the fleet:"

Constantinople is built at the extremity of a Peninsula some 60 miles long and from 20 to 30 miles wide, bounded on the north by the Black Sea on the South by the Sea of Marmora and with the Bosphorus at its eastern end. About 20 miles westward of Constantinople there is a very strong position extending across the Peninsula which is here reduced to some 12 miles in width by the bay or harbour of Buyk Chekmeya on the South and Lake Durkos on the north. The Carason stream which rises close to Lake Derkos and runs into the harbour of Buyk Checkmeya has worn a deep valley for itself which offers a position of great natural strength. Strengthened by a chain of redoubts, and with both flanks supported by a naval force such a position would be impregnable....

All that would be required would be to send some officers to Constantinople, who would quietly study the position already referred to, prepare detailed plans of each work and draw up a regular project for having them rapidly constructed by the labour of the country. Nothing need be known of these operations if quietly & judiciously carried out. Should no cause arise for sending a British Army to the East, the plans might quietly rest in the War Office. Should it become requisite to mobilise the Army a telegram could be sent to the Officers at Constantinople who had designed the works and they could be at once begun.

A careful study of the best plan of this position shows that only 12 redoubts would be requisite, these need not be capable of resisting modern siege Artillery; as denied the use of the sea, the Russians could not get a siege train across the Balkan. The labour of 6000 men for 21 days would complete these redoubts. The requisite armament might be kept ready to be sent out, four steamers of 1000 tons each would convey the requisite armament 4 Batteries of Garrison Artillery and two Companies of Engineers. These steamers might arrive in Constantinople on the

16th day, and by the time the Army arrived from England, not only might the works be completed but preparation made for encamping the whole force. Wood is very plentiful, and huts could be easily constructed for the Army - Tramways might be laid from the Constantinople-Adrianople line of Railway in rear of the position. In actual possession of Constantinople and covered by such a line of works the Army might remain perfectly secure fed by the sea and posted 20 miles away from the town.

But such a line of works are not quite all that is wanted. Foiled before Constantinople the Russians might detach a portion of their Army to occupy the Chersonese and so close the Dardanelles, such an occupation would threaten to cut, if it did not actually cut the communications of the Army by sea with England; to prevent this it would be requisite to reconstruct the lines of Boulahir, which were thrown up at the beginning of the Crimean War. It would be quite feasible for the English Commander to detach at any moment a portion of his force to hold these lines, the distance by sea being not only shorter but easier to cross over, than the distance by land, holding thus the keys of the Dardanelles & Bosphorus, with a powerful Fleet in the Sea of Marmora and Black Sea, Great Britain could afford to await events. The outlay entailed would be but trifling. The travelling expenses and pay of a few officers sent at once to Constantinople and a subsequent outlay on the works themselves of some £12 or 15,000.

To carry out the foregoing proposals little is wanted, but care, prudence and foresight; should it not be requisite to use the plans nothing is lost, should it be requisite to occupy Constantinople, the value of such plans prepared beforehand, would be simply incalculable.

Home's second memorandum was devoted to an analysis of the probable rate of a Russian advance upon Constantinople, and the preliminary mobilisation arrangements that Britain might make simultaneously with the planning of fortifications before the Turkish capital and the southward progress of the Russian armies. The latter, he believed, would concentrate and cross the Pruth at Sculiarni and Kercheren, reaching the Danube in twenty-one days, the Balkans in thirty-eight

and Adrianople in fifty-one. "Adrianople is 135 miles from Constantinople (for our purpose 100)," he calculated, "and at 7 miles a day the Russians would take 13 days to do this distance or get practically to Constantinople 64 days after crossing the Pruth.

If the order to mobilise the English Army is given it may be practically ready for embarkation in 21 days and at Constantinople in 42 days afterwards. If the order to mobilise be given when Russia crosses the Pruth the English Army will be in position 22 days before the arrival of the Russian Army. If when Russia crosses the Danube, one day before her appearance near Constantinople; if when Russia crosses the Balkan, 16 days too late."

Fortunately, "the period taken up in mobilising the Army could be diminished....by at once taking certain steps" which he proceeded to enumerate in detail:

A. Provide Clothes, Boots and Equipment for 25,000 men.

B. Take the wagons and harness out of store at Woolwich and place them at the proper points.

C. Gradually move the Troops destined for active service to the proper places - an easy matter.

D. Gradually purchase horses.

E. Strengthen the Garrison of Malta with the Artillery and Engineers to be sent on at once to Constantinople when requisite.

F. Send an Armament for the Lines to Malta and retain it on board ship ready to go on when requisite.

G. Prepare warm Clothing for the Troops and huts if a winter Campaign is expected....

Should these preparations be made and energetically pushed thro' it might perhaps be possible to wait until Russia has crossed the Danube prior to mobilising the Army, but the margin is very small and an obstinate official a stupid blunder or gale of wind might upset everything....

Lastly, determine clearly what you want done, and

place the execution of your plans in the hands of men who have energy & determination to override all obstacles. Do not trust to the statements of the permanent Civil Officials, but let the General who is to command have with his Staff the preparation of the whole operations."

We cannot tell what influence these reports had upon Disraeli, It may well have been considerable, for he was always more attentive to information from secret or underground sources than to the official stereotyped and usually worthless memoranda of the Horse Guards. There was a certain reassurance in these timely and concrete proposals that undoubtedly eased much of Disraeli's anxiety as to the practicability of preparing for the occupation of Constantinople. But what probably appealed most to him was that Home had displayed a restraint unusual to soldiers in confining his suggestions to the political-strategic issue immediately at hand - the occupation of Constantinople solely for defensive strategic or peace-keeping purposes. At the same time it had been clearly implied if not explicitly argued that the occupation of Constantinople would serve, as Lisbon did during the Peninsular War, as the necessary base for future operations inland against Russia: for it was clear that the danger point was the Russian crossing of the Danube, not of the Balkans. Moreover, while Home's estimate of cost appeared unreasonably modest, he had argued with sense that even if the proposed defence-plans were never put to use, nothing would have been lost. As a result, on Monday 23 October, after further long discussions with MacDougall and Home, Disraeli and Hardy decided that "Gallipoli alone would do no good," and though "the other lines involve a large force... we must do nothing or that;"[57] they therefore resolved "to

57. Hardy to Richmond, pte, 24 October 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/16.

send officers to survey the ground behind Constantinople, and to look forward to guarding it in case of need."[58]

With the decision to send a Royal Engineer mission to Constantinople, Simmons as Inspector-General-Fortifications inadvertently became, and remained throughout the crisis, the Government's unofficial military adviser; and although in Wolseley's opinion he was "at present unknown to the Army & outside of his own Corps one who commands no following" was "thought the best man to command our forces should it be decided to confine their operations to garrisoning a line of works in front of Constantinople & of Gallipoli."[59] Originally to consist exclusively of Colonel Sir Howard Elphinstone and Colonel Home, the constitution of the mission was almost immediately recast: the Queen objected to Elphinstone's appointment "in consequence of his connection with the Court;"[60] while Simmons had come to the conclusion after drafting detailed instructions on the basis of Home's earlier memoranda that because "the ground to be examined and sketched is very extensive, the work laborious, requiring a great deal of drawing, calculations and writing," it was essential that three additional officers be placed under Home's command,[61] the most notable being Captain (later

58. Private diary, 24 October 1876, ibid, T501/11.

59. Wolseley to R.Wolseley, 20 November and 20 December 1876, WFP.

60. Simmons to Deedes, 28 October 1876, 'Letters as Secretary of State for War,' Cranbrook Papers, T501/94.

61. Same to same, 29 October 1876, ibid.

Major-General Sir Thomas) Fraser whose studies of the field engineering of the American Civil and Franco-Prussian Wars, and particularly his Royal Engineer Prize Essays on "The Defence of a Position selected as a Field of Battle," and "The Attack of Fortresses" had earned him a reputation as the foremost engineering theorist in the British Army.[62] Home's instructions were to plan for the improvised fortification of the Bujuk-Checkmedji and Bulair ridges before Constantinople and Gallipoli respectively while recognizing that forty to fifty thousand troops and seventy to eighty 40-pounder guns were all the forces Britain could spare.[63] It was hoped that these preparations could be kept entirely secret,[64] for, as Hardy perceived, "signs of war would bring on discussion - then comes explanation which under the circumstances is almost impossible for your objects cannot be disclosed."[65] Unfortunately, Baker's own reconnaissances over the same ground with Ardagh,[66] and Hobart's alleged

62. Capt. T.Fraser, "The Defence of a Position selected as a Field of Battle,"(R.E.Prize Essay, 1875), Professional Papers of the Royal Engineers, Woolwich, 1875; Maj.-General Sir Thomas Fraser, Recollections with Reflections, London, Blackwood, 1914, p.273.

63. Instructions to Major and Bt. Lt.-Col. Home,CB, RE, 26 October 1876, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

64. Corry to Deedes, confdl, 28 October 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/94.

65. Hardy to Deedes, n.d.; private diary, 15 November 1876, ibid, T501/94 and 11.

66. Home to Simmons, perfectly private, 17 November 1876, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1; Confidential Report upon the Military Position of Turkey and especially upon the Advantages of the Line of Defence between Lake Dercos on the Black Sea and Bujuk-Checkmedji on the Sea of Marmora, Col. V.Baker, 25 October 1876, encl. in Elliot to Derby, no.1206, confdl, 26 October 1876, PRO/FO 78/2466.

bombasticism "to sweep the Russian fleet from the Black Sea and to bombard the Russian ports"[67] had compromised all prospects of such security, and the mission was soon suspected by Ignatiev[68] and the irrepressible Opposition critic, Havelock, of being an official representation designed to influence "the Council and public opinion of Stamboul more than the thousands of Russians massed on the frontiers," and to "drag England into a war into which the country did not desire to go."[69] Carrying their surveying instruments in shot-gun cases as if on a hunting expedition, the mission sailed from Marseilles on 4 November and reached Constantinople exactly one week later.[70]

In determining the defence requirements for Constantinople, Home was drawn to re-examine at first hand Turkish capacity for waging a defensive war against Russia, and to reconsider the whole question of basing British policy upon the inviolability of Constantinople. In Home's opinion, the victorious campaign against the Serbs and 3,000 Russian auxiliaries had deluded the Turks with a misleading impression as to the real efficacy of their armies for operations on a truly continental scale. He agreed with Vincent and the Times Correspondent that "the men at the War Office in

67. Elliot to Derby, no.1265, 9 November 1876, ibid; Hansard, 1877, CCXXXII, cc.1379-81.

68. Same to same, no.1317, 29 November 1876, ibid.

69. Hansard, 12 February 1877, cc.161-2, 259; Memorandum rec'd from Lord Cadogan, 9 February 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/3.

70. Fraser, Recollections, p.283; Home to Simmons, 11 November 1876, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1(sent to H.R.H., the Duke of Cambridge and the Secretary of State for War).

Constantinople are deficient in the very rudiments of strategy, unfit for the handling of such bulky armies as could be of any avail against the immense forces with which, were Russia free-handed, the Ottoman troops would be confronted,"[71] or for the conduct of amphibious operations along the Black Sea coast.[72] The Turkish defence plan, adopted by the Cabinet on 13 November 1876,[73] seemed almost naively optimistic and unwisely contrary to all the experience of recent warfare; for in a realistic appraisal of the absence of enlightened leadership, sufficient cavalry, supplies, transport or lateral rail communications, of the Turkish aptitude for trench warfare, and of the possibility of British intervention, it envisaged decisively checking the Russians along the line of the Danube by concentrating the bulk of the Turkish armies in northern Bulgaria, and isolating them in five self-contained independent corps based on Silistria, Rustchuk, Widdin, Schumla, and Varna as centres of operation and refuge but at the same time making no provision for a mobile defence or one in depth along or below the Balkan. That the Danube was the danger-point was now doubly evident. "Troops holding the Danubian

71. Home to Simmons, no.26, 19 March 1877, encl. in WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0631, 'Reports and Memoranda Relative to the Defence of Constantinople and other Positions in Turkey,' p.183, WOP; Vincent, op.cit.; Times, 21 March 1876.

72. Memorandum by Col. Home, n.d., PRO/FO 78/2688; Home to Simmons, no.31, 24 March 1877, Reports, pp.222-3.

73. 'Examen detaillé du plan adopté par le Cabinet Ottoman pour la defence de la Turque d'Europe,' 13 November 1876, Bluhm Pasha, PRO/FO 195/1117.

fortresses are simply wasted," wrote Home,[74] "The Turks dwell on the memories of 1828-29-53-54, and appear to hold these fortresses, forgetting that although railways and improved arms have added greatly to the power of the attack, the works are what they have ever been." The line of the Danube was "really indefensible by such means." A Russian passage might be "delayed by the use of light troops, clouds of irregular cavalry and by breaking up roads, bridges and devastating the country, but no river has ever stopped an army or ever will if the army is determined to cross - more especially a river like the Danube." Moreover, it was Home's view, corroborated by contemporary reports by Vincent, Baker[75] and Bluhm Pasha, that the "so-called Danube army of Turkey," "Turkish war preparations" and "the present race of Turkish generals" were "much over-rated."[76] Home's letters and despatches to Simmons, Jocelyn, Corry and Deedes over the next two months mirrored the description of the Turkish armies that Vincent later delivered to the R.U.S.I.[77] "From the Danube to Constantinople, from Nisch to Bourgas, nothing is ready. Money has failed. The fortresses are falling daily into greater ruin. They are unprovided with any modern

74. Home to Simmons, 19 December 1876, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1; Home to Jocelyn, no.8, confdl, 17 December 1876, PRO/FO 195/1117; no.1369, confdl, PRO/FO 78/2468.

75. 'Report by Bluhm Pasha on Strength of Turkish Forces North of Balkans,' encl. in Elliot to Derby, no.1402, confdl, 31 December 1876, PRO/FO 78/2468; 'Report by V.Baker on Turkish Army of Danube and Varna,' encl. in Elliot to Derby, no.50, 18 January 1877, PRO/FO 78/2565.

76. Home to Simmons, no.26, 19 March 1877, Reports, p.183.

77. Vincent, op.cit., 15 January 1877, J.R.U.S.I., XXI, 1877, p.258.

improvement, they are well nigh bare of heavy ordnance, and where there is ordnance there is neither shot nor shell. One regiment is armed with this rifle, another with that. Both are unserviceable. For neither are there cartridges. Provisions are wanting, clothing is lacking, transport there is none." "The drill," wrote Home sardonically,[78] is of the wildest description, and accompanied with much shouting and waving of swords. The bugles were generally employed in playing a sort of discordant French fanfare to which the men paid not the slightest attention but marched about the ground with a long slouching step. I was informed that neither men nor officers believe that European drill is essential for fighting." As to the effective strength of the Turkish army in Europe, Home emphasised again and again that to count on more than 135,000 "would be dangerous."[79] In view of all this evidence which seemed to point to the early capitulation of the Turkish field armies and a rapid Russian approach to Constantinople, Home believed that the Turkish capital could only be adequately defended in a manner impracticable for Britain to undertake. In addition to laying a cable from Malta to the Dardanelles, maintaining an organised watch along the shores of the Black Sea, and strengthening the Fleet in the eastern Mediterranean, the Bujuk-Checkmedji position alone called for 65,000 troops, 120 guns and an extensive system of field-works with strong wire entanglements, trench railways, roads, telegraphs, store-

78. Home to Simmons, no.26, 19 March 1877, Reports, p.183.

79. Same to same, no.10, 25 December 1876, Reports, p.99; Memorandum by Col. Home, n.d., PRO/FO 78/2688.

houses and landing-wharfs:[80] a further 20,000 troops would probably be required to hold the Gallipoli Peninsula.[81]

There were other drawbacks to the defence of Constantinople. "To hold the place," wrote Home:[82]

> You must hold 4 distinct lines, you must cover the City on the Asiatic & European sides, & you must cover the Dardanelles on both sides. Permanent works to do this would cost 25 or 30 millions. There are in this City a million people some of the greatest scoundrels on earth (Xtians) how will you keep this City in order & garrison the Forts. Will 60,000 men do it? And how long will England keep 60,000 men here? And conterminous with a great Empire she must do so. Railways will be made through the Balkan, or from Belgrade - & Russia will besiege the place. England here would be like France in Rome. The Prestige & moral power of this place is enormous. Its situation is unrivalled, its advantages no one contests. BUT to seize a place & then abandon it, is the severest blow the prestige of any country can have....

Moreover, by falling "into Ignatieff's arms" and proclaiming "publicly and to everyone in a very unguarded foolish way about Turks & Turkish morals & customs," Salisbury had "made hash" of his mission to restore British influence at Constantinople, and forfeited all chance of the Porte acquiescing in Disraeli's plan to occupy the capital and the Gallipoli Peninsula as a 'material guarantee.'[83] "The

80. Same to same, no.1, 15 November 1876; no.2, 18 November 1876, Reports, pp.7-11, 28-30; pte, 11 November 1876, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1.

81. 'Memorandum on the Dardanelles,' Col. Home, 3 February 1877; 'Report on the Defences of the Dardanelles,' Capt. J.C.Ardagh, December 1876, encl. in Home to Simmons, no.20, 3 February 1877, Reports, pp.130-155; 'Defences of Gallipoli,' no.16, 14 January 1877, ibid, pp.102-23; 'Report on the Defences of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles,' Lt. E.F.Jeffrys, 26 February 1877, PRO/ADM 1/6447.

82. Home to Simmons, confdl, 20 December 1876, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1.

83. Same to same, pte, 16 January 1877, ibid.

result has been a miserable fiasco," wrote Home, "the mistake that has been made is that we have had no policy whatever. We have never known what we were going to do, or how we were going to do it."[84] Russia had capitalised upon this confusion of policy by temporising at the Constantinople Conference (thereby throwing the responsibility for war upon Turkey) while mobilising to forestall British intervention.[85]

Under these circumstances, Home believed, Britain had only one course of action. "You must be very careful not to get England embroiled in war with Turkey alone for an ally," he cautioned in reference to an alarmist memorandum by Simmons, "God help us if this be the case....I have much to gain by war, but I can't think of war with the Turks alone as allies but with horror. It is a war that if disastrous, and I think it might possibly be so, would shake England terribly. We cannot waste English power in backing up a falling Empire.... The time has come to cut it up and let us have our share of it."[86] The whole Eastern question was no longer a matter of "religion or sentiment" but one of policy: could we maintain the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire and, if so, was it worth doing. "The first is a soldier's question," Home declared, "the second a statesman's. If the answer be that we cannot maintain it, or that its maintenance is not

84. Same to same, 8 February 1877, ibid.

85. Home to Jocelyn, very confdl, 13 December 1876, PRO/FO 195/1117; copy in Elliot to Derby, no.1360, 14 December 1876, PRO/FO 78/2468; same to same, confdl, no.8, 17 December 1876, PRO/FO 195/1117; Home to Simmons, confdl, 20 December 1876, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1.

86. Home to Simmons, 26 December 1876, ibid.

worth the trouble, the question arises, What part of the Ottoman Empire shall we take possession of to cover and protect our interests in case of war."[87] Clearly Constantinople would not do. "Constantinople is continually termed the Key of India," he asked, "but has anyone shown how it is the key."[88] To protect the Indian sea-route, "England requires in the Levant a pied a terre to cover the Northern end of the Suez Canal, a Naval Station for Men of War, a Coaling Station for vessels en route for India, a half-way house and point d'appui between Malta and Aden." Constantinople afforded none of these advantages, and the only alternative was "to seek some compensation or equivalent in the Eastern Mediterranean." Rhodes, he felt, was "well situated to command the Levant, and Archipelago, it covers and protects, the Northern end of the Suez Canal. But it is out of the way of vessels on passage between India and England. Such vessels to reach Rhodes must pass round Crete. Whoever holds Crete, holds Rhodes in check...." Similarly, Cyprus was "situated too much to the Eastward. It does not watch the Archipelago nor can it act as a coaling station for vessels en route to India. It however commands the Gulf of Scanderoon...but is not well situated to cover the Northern end of the Suez Canal." Home agreed with Brackenbury and Wolseley that the strategic location of Crete was "undoubtedly the best." It fulfilled all the requirements, and its military advantages were "so enormous that to prevent its becoming Russian, Italian or Austrian

87. Ibid.

88. Memorandum by Col. Home, 23 December 1876, PRO/FO 78/2688.

it should be occupied." Indeed, 10,000 troops should be ear-marked for the sudden seizure of "Crete, Egypt or Rhodes, or all three,"[89] or at least plans made for the occupation of the Asiatic as well as the European side of the Dardanelles.[90]

By analysing Turkey's capacity for defensive warfare in relation to Britain's ability to provide military assistance, Home had shown good military reasons why the occupation of Constantinople could not, and should not be attempted, and why under the new conditions of warfare and in view of the Russian land threat from Asia Minor, the Palmerstonian policy of defending the Indian sea-route at Constantinople was at best questionable. Hitherto, his alternative proposals had only been sketched out in private letters to Simmons; they bore no official character and were probably not known to the War Minister. But with the failure of the Constantinople Conference to avert the probability of a Russo-Turkish war, and with the imminent departure of Salisbury and Elliot for London, Home naturally turned to Salisbury rather than Simmons for further instructions.[91]

Both Salisbury and Elliot impressed upon him "very strongly that it was absolutely requisite (looking to future complications that might possibly arise) that this country should be completely examined, more especially those portions which may in the future be of importance to British interests."[92]

89. Home to Simmons, 20 December 1876, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

90. Same to same, 10 and 11 December 1876, ibid.

91. Same to same, no.17, 15 January 1877, ibid.

92. Ibid.

Since this directive considerably exceeded that which he had originally been issued, Home asked Salisbury to put it in writing. Accordingly, he was to "obtain as much military information as he can regarding the Turkish empire, particularly the Islands of Rhodes & Cyprus... furnish reports of these...and also visit Egypt if he considers it necessary."[93] Nothing was to be done, however, until Lord Salisbury had left Constantinople and on 15 January Elliot cabled the War Office asking permission to retain officers to survey the ports at Rhodes, Cyprus and Batoum, but making no allusion to the broader nature of their duties, or to the changed circumstances under which the request was being made.[94]

In his official despatch to Simmons on the same day, but which did not reach London until 2 February, Home explained that his original instructions "were drawn up under an entirely different phase of the political question to that at present existing," and that Salisbury's orders "point rather to the obtaining of such information as may enable HMG to seek for and select suitable compensation should extensive territorial changes take place in the East."[95] In accordance with his written orders, which he seemed to view with a discernible measure of satisfaction, Home submitted to Simmons a list of work priorities which included

93. Memorandum written by Sir Philip Currie, signed by Salisbury, dated Pera, 15 January 1877, PRO/FO 78/2688; see also copy in no.17, 15 January 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

94. Memorandum by J.L.A.Simmons, 10 February 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

95. No.17, 15 January 1877, ibid.

examining and reporting on "Burgos; all the Balkan passes; Varna, Pravadi & Schumla; the line of the Danube; Roumania; Rhodes; Cyprus; certain points connected with Egypt; the defensive line between the Gulf of Ismail and Black Sea; Trezibonde & Kars & on defences of that place & Erzeroum." As a further indication of his ideas, Home forwarded a memorandum, undated but probably written on or about 12 January for Lord Salisbury's advice, suggesting the seizure of the Dardanelles as a "territorial compensation" in the event of the partition of Turkey.[96] He envisaged subsequently erecting unusually strong defensive works on both the European and Asiatic sides, costing approximately £2,632,000 and garrisoned by 20,000 men in war and 4,000 in peace.

Home set to work a few days prior to Salisbury's departure; and on that day, 22 January, described to Simmons the progress made:[97]

> Fraser is en route to Batoum & is to return if he can via Odessa. Grover Anstey and Hare are at the Dardanelles two on the Asiatic side, sketching the ground over Kali Sultan, and one on the European side sketching the landing places on the west of the Gallipoli Peninsula. Chermside is at Adrianople on his way here & Cockburn at Lule Bourgas on his way here via Wisa & Midin. Ardagh is here, he is still delicate - & I think of sending him

96. Memorandum by Colonel Home on the Seizure of the Dardanelles, n.d., Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/3: on 12 January 1877, Home wrote to Currie; "I enclose a memo on the Gallipoli Peninsula which perhaps Lord S. might like to see - the statistics are well worthy of attention...." Home to Currie, 12 January 1877, PRO/FO 78/2688. See also Home to Simmons, 12 January 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1.

97. Home to Simmons, 22 January 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

home via Egypt. I go to the Dardanelles tomorrow, and will return here, meet Cockburn & Chermside, & then go North to the Danube. Return here & visit Cyprus & Rhodes.

Home, in the meantime, had been drawing up plans for the seizure of the Dardanelles as outlined in his memorandum to Salisbury, and on the 28th reported them completed, together with a change in his itinerary of inspection.[98] "I have now determined all questions as to the seizure of Gallipoli & turning the Dardanelles defences. I propose doing Rhodes & Cyprus, the weather is perfectly fearful & the Balkans will be all snowed up. My idea is to do Rhodes & Cyprus first and then return via the Balkans so as to be in England by the end of March...." Three days later, on 1 February, he cabled the War Office that Anstey was en route to Odessa, Ardagh to Egypt and himself about to proceed to Rhodes and Cyprus.[99] This telegram arrived in London the same day as his despatch of 15 January. The effect was immediate and electric.

Now Home's disclosures about the Turkish armies and the defence requirements of Constantinople had produced quite a different impression in London. Prior to their reception in early December, Hardy and Disraeli had relied heavily upon Simmons' advice in dampening the exhuberant schemes of Wolseley and the Duke of Cambridge. On 12 October, perhaps piqued at Disraeli's secret overtures to the War Office, the Commander-in-Chief had cautioned Hardy "that the Secretary of State & Comdr in Chief ought conjointly to be prepared for <u>any emergency</u>...& who knows how soon such

98. Same to same, 28 January 1877, <u>ibid</u>.

99. Same to same, 1 February 1877, <u>ibid</u>.

emergency may arise:[100]

I think I ought to put forward a memorandum to you on the subject & I am most anxious to do so. We need not make the slightest fuss about it, but you & I ought to have our plans formed as to how many men we could bring together at short notice and you would have to look to your supplies. I have lately inspected our largest Garrisons. What there is of our troops is excellent & perfect both in efficiency & equipment. But are there a sufficiency of Stores & Supplies & how are we off for Reserves. Herein lies our great difficulty. You ought to have your plans so prepared that should you sit at the Cabinet Table & be asked by your Colleagues what this Country could do Militarily to defend its own interests, not the Turkish Empire as such, you would be able to give a ready & immediate answer. I don't think that at present you are in a position to do so, & I think you & I between us & assisted by prudent & safe assistants (not the Intelligence Department I fear) should now work out this problem. It is not an easy one but it must be solved....

In his memoranda of 24 October and 27 November, as well as in numerous letters, he recommended what amounted to the full-scale mobilisation of two army-corps so that "in the event of any very sudden emergency...we should not imitate the days previous to the outbreak of the Crimean War."[101] In an unsolicited memorandum referred to earlier,[102] Wolseley argued for an aggressive strategic policy involving "a manly defensive attitude in Turkey for the protection of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, and a vigorous offensive from India as a base against Russian Turkestan." "Success in war," wrote Wolseley, "is only obtained by bold conceptions."

100. Cambridge to Hardy, pte, 12 October 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/264.

101. 'Memorandum for the Secretary of State on the requirements of the Service in the present condition of Europe,' 24 October 1876; 'Memorandum for the Secretary of State,' 27 November 1876; Cambridge to Hardy, pte, 25 and 27 October, 15 and 18 November 1876, ibid, T501/81,268.

102. 'Memorandum on the Eastern Question,' 10 November 1876, WOP.

A British army-corps should therefore operate from the Gulf of Enos against the rear of the Russian armies which could be expected to reach Constantinople in ninety days; Crete should be occupied; while from India a mobile expeditionary force should strike a "hard blow" at Tashkent driving Russia back "100 years in her struggle for...the whole of Asia."

Hardy steadily parried such proposals. While he recognised that "each Corps should be made a more complete representation of what it is meant to be when made up," and that it would no doubt "be necessary to go into all our requirements for any emergency," having everything "clearly defined so that we may be ready for action should necessity arise," he maintained that "at present no force, to take the field in the ordinary way, is contemplated...no great movements are likely just at present, and probably not during the winter."[103] As he explained to Carnarvon, "if we are to act, preparations should be made but if preparations are made panic ensues and misconceptions of all kinds prevail. I cannot besides do anything without money...."[104]

Disraeli doubted "the expediency of circulating" Wolseley's memorandum throughout the Cabinet "though, of course," he confided to Hardy,[105] "it contained much that must always interest you & myself." "But what will be desirable & necessary," he continued, "is that, on the

103. Hardy to Cambridge, 26 October 1876; cited in Col. W.Verner, The Military Life of George, Duke of Cambridge, London, Murray, 1910, 2 vols., II, p.104.

104. Hardy to Carnarvon, 15 November 1876, Carnarvon Papers, PRO/30/6/124.

105. Disraeli to Hardy, 30 November 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/266.

fitting occasion, you yourself should state to the Cabinet in detail all the points connected with the contemplated movements, British & Russian: the time it will take to arrive at Constantinople after the passage of Pruth etc etc etc. And the time requisite for us, if we move troops to the peninsula of the Turkish Capital. This you may be called upon to do very suddenly...."

In considering these points, Hardy was content to accept the sanguine word of Simmons, who, recognising Britain's comparative military weakness and the unlikelihood of a third power actively cooperating with Britain to coerce Russia, was at this stage inclined to take an overly optimistic view of the difficulties in the way of a Russian advance, the effectiveness of the Turkish army, the condition of the Danubian and Bulgarian fortresses, and the Turkish determination to hold them. His "confidential observations" on Captain Baring's disturbing memorandum of 16 October, drawn up at Hardy's specific request, had "materially" modified the bleak picture of Turkish defences that had been presented.[106] Indeed, concluded Simmons:

It is quite possible, looking at it from a purely military point of view, that the Turks, by entrenching positions in front may, with the aid of their fleet, keep the Russians out of Constantinople. The Turks are well-known to be splendid troops for defence, and considering that so long as the Russians have not command of the sea, they cannot bring up heavy guns in any great number, and will probably, from the difficulties of transport, have no excessive number of field guns accompanying their army; considering also the

106. Hardy to Deedes, n.d. but certainly between 24-28 October 1876, 'Letters as Secretary of State for War,' Cranbrook Papers, T501/94; 'Observations on Confidential Memorandum by Captain Baring, R.A., dated 16th October 1876,' Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

difficulties they would experience in the supply of their army, the Turks might expect to make a very long and well sustained defence, provided political or other considerations, such as disturbances, or anticipated disturbances at Constantinople, did not induce them to come to terms....

On 27 October, the same day Simmons submitted these remarks on the Bulgarian theatre, Captain Clarke returned from his secret mission to south Russia and was interviewed the following day by the Duke of Cambridge, Lord Tenterden and Simmons.[107] In a long letter to Deedes (for Hardy's information) describing his interview with Clarke,[108] Simmons maintained his optimistic view of the situation, deprecating all urgency and the idea of extensive Russian plans and preparations:

He tells me that the Russians have about 25,000 men along the Turco-Russian frontier in Asia of whom about 2000 are at or near Poti on the Black Sea - about 2000 at or near Azoringhetti - 4000 or 5000 in front of Ardahan and about 12,000 at or near Alexandropal (Guivri). He says the remainder of the Army of the Caucasus is in its usual cantonments & not on a war footing.

This is very important as it shows that no great preparations have as yet been made on the side of the Caucasus, and the season is so far advanced that I think we may take it for granted, this information being correct, that nothing will be attempted on this side this winter.

The intelligence department say that there are only about 3000 of the regular Turkish army on that frontier but considering that the Moslem population will be hostile I should doubt the Russians attempting anything with so small a force as 25,000 men dispersed on so long a line.

This altogether disposes of the rumoured probability of Amyrna being their supposed objective in Asia Minor. Even if other considerations of the distance and difficulties of

107. Cambridge to Hardy, pte, 30 October 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/268/4; Tenterden to Derby, 28 October 1876, bound volume, 'Letters from Tenterden,' Derby Papers.

108. Simmons to Deedes, 28 October 1876, 'Letters as Secretary of State for War,' Cranbrook Papers, T501/94.

the country do not do so. The only way they can possibly get at Smyrna is by sea. It is undefended by works....

He added that Russians spoke freely of the necessity of their some day possessing Batoum the only sea port at the East end of the Black Sea. No doubt they would seize that with a couple of thousand men but they would scarcely undertake such an operation without being prepared to do something more serious which it appears they are not at present....

Two days later, when submitting Colonel Home's instructions to Hardy for final approval, Simmons turned his attention to the problems and risks inherent in Britain's involvement in an Eastern war. In a cool and careful appreciation of "the military position of affairs in the East" on 30 October,[109] he expressed apprehension about two features of Britain's war machinery, which, he believed, were open to "grave consideration"; the size and contemplated role of an expeditionary force; and the question of maintaining it overseas. He feared that only by "great exertion" could an army of 40,000 men be placed on a war footing in six to eight weeks - the minimum time necessary if the force were to be of any use; and since it would be contending with large conscript armies directly and easily supplied and reinforced by rail, its action must necessarily be very limited not moving far from the sea, and preferably forming part of a larger combination of forces. He pointed out that in 1854-5, because Britain and France, "the two greatest maritime powers in the world," had been allies, the Mediterranean sea-route had been as secure "as a lake in Cumberland." But "since then the Alabama has shown what

109. 'Memorandum covering Instructions to Colonel Home; submitted to Secretary of State for War,' 30 October 1876, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

a few hostile cruisers can do to obstruct such freedom of communication as would be necessary for provisioning a distant army by sea. It therefore becomes necessary to consider whether there is any possibility of a maritime power uniting with Russia, and what steps the Admiralty are prepared under every eventuality to take to secure the safe and uninterrupted transit of ships from England to the theatre of war. 'In determining this it should be considered what portion of our fleet in the event of war would be required for the protection of our coasts and harbours, which in their presently imperfectly defended state are exposed to insult...." Simmons concluded on a note of caution. Since "the action of England must depend on the possible combination of the other powers...some stronger combination than that of Turkey with Great Britain appears necessary."

It is plain from these three memoranda, all falling within the period of a week, that Simmons did not seriously believe in the practicability of a Russian advance to Constantinople if the Turks took the barest of precautions, and that this was sufficient excuse for not extending Britain's commitment in the East beyond the occupation of the Turkish capital. But throughout the following month, in correspondence and conversation with British financiers, businessmen, civil engineers, and arms-manufactorers, who had built the Turkish roads and railways, or supplied the Porte with arms, equipment and warlike stores,[110] Simmons found cause to

110. Several of these letters from financiers, industrialists, etc., as well as from British residents in Turkey can be found in the Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

change his mind, firstly, as to the probable success of an eventual Turkish defence, and therefore, secondly, the degree to which Britain should commit herself. Home's initial report confirmed these apprehensions, and in his covering memorandum forwarding Home's plans to Hardy, as well as in several letters, Simmons urged prompt and far-reaching measures.[111]

He was convinced that the rate and strength of any Russian advance depended solely on the availability of supplies. Since these were plentiful north of the Balkans, Simmons feared that unless the Turks collapsed the Danubian bridges, stoutly defended Schumla, Varna and Pravadi, and destroyed all their railways and rolling stock, a Russian advance, at least to the Balkans, would be "merely a military promenade covered by cavalry." The contingency of prolonged Turkish resistance at the Balkan passes, however, and the known impoverished state of the country to the South, would probably compel the Russians to form intermediate supply depots both above and below the mountain range, a task which Simmons reasoned, would prevent them reaching Constantinople before the following June. But this was no reason on the part of the Government to delay "in

111. 'Memorandum by the Inspector-General Fortifications on Lieutenant-Colonel Home's Report No.1 of 15 November 1876,' 2 December 1876: 'Further memorandum by the Inspector-General Fortifications in Reference to Lieutenant-Colonel Home's Report No.1 of 15 November 1876,' 4 December 1876; 'Memorandum by Sir Lintorn Simmons on the Probabilities of a Russian invasion of Turkey, and the Extent to which it may be carried in a Winter campaign,' 2 December 1876. Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2: see also Reports, (W33), pp.18-27; Simmons to Hardy, 4 December 1876, 6 December 1876, 'Letters as Secretary of State for War,' Cranbrook Papers, T501/94.

arriving at a decision as to the course of action they will take." The effective Turkish army, much reduced by sickness and privation in the present war with Servia, was probably no more than 150,000 strong, and "must be most seriously and rapidly diminishing in strength." In these circumstances, the brunt of the defence of Turkey and Constantinople must necessarily fall upon the British army, which should be immediately placed on a war footing. Such defensive measures as the Turks themselves were undertaking should be placed under British supervision. Schumla, Varna and Pravadi should be inspected and strengthened, and plans made to demolish the Danubian bridges and destroy the Varna-Rustchuk railway and all its rolling stock. More heavy guns should be shipped from England, and an additional force of 10,000 men earmarked for the defence of Gallipoli. A field force should be brought from India; and 100,000 Turks taken into British pay. The telegraph cable, as Colonel Home had suggested, should be extended to the Dardanelles, and arrangements made with the Navy to prevent Greek privateers disrupting the shipment of supplies and reinforcements. Should the "Russians cross the Turkish frontier," Britain should immediately declare war, and "put forth her whole strength in the struggle, from the very first commencement." "A military demonstration to hold Constantinople under the belief that England may nevertheless possibly not be drawn into a war, will be a fatal mistake and a delusion:" it would expose the "wreck of the Turkish army" to the certainty of utter defeat, allow the Russians to consolidate their position within Turkey, and transform the campaign "into a siege," comparable to Metz or Paris, with the gravest

consequences for India. "The struggle will be one for life and death," wrote Simmons, seemingly unaware of the truism. "A British force of 50,000 men alone will be quite inadequate to ensure success; that is, if by success it is understood that Great Britain is to do more than sustain a siege in front of Constantinople....It would be altogether derogatory to British interests to avow her incapacity to keep the field against Russia, and to submit to be penned up within entrenchments....By carrying on such a war she would descend from her position as a first-class power, and lose her prestige in the East." Before it was possible to draw up a more comprehensive plan of operations, however, it was essential that certain "considerations of the highest importance" be resolved by the Government as the basis of its future military policy under the changed conditions. Firstly, the naval measures to be adopted for ensuring the free communication with Constantinople of unarmed supply ships; secondly, what effective force Britain could bring into and sustain in the field; thirdly, the probable size of the enemy force; fourthly, the probable role of the Russo-Servian army; and finally, the "most efficient and economical way" to increase the size and strength of the British army.

In putting these central questions, Simmons laid bare the still unsettled and fluid (some said drifting) nature of British military policy, which was determined, not so much by her own inability to act when necessary, but, as Simmons rightly pointed out, by the action and possible combinations of other powers. On being asked by Hardy to draw up plans for a hypothetical expedition to Constantinople, presumably on the basis of, or as a check upon Home's and

Simmons' suggestions, the Duke of Cambridge felt unable to do so satisfactorily without clearer Governmental direction.[112] "The Government alone can decide on the policy to be adopted," he complained, "we ought to have the contingencies laid down clearly and definitely so that there may be no confusion." Now everything was "at sixes and sevens. We are working in one direction, Simmons has other views, the Navy are left out altogether, yet without them we can do nothing." A "secret and confidential committee" should therefore be instituted, consisting of the Secretary of State for War, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and himself, - with the professional departmental heads, the First Sea Lord, Quarter-Master-General, Adjutant-General, Surveyor-General, and Inspector-General-Fortifications, as its advisers - to draw up plans based on these contingencies, and to make the preparations necessary for effecting them. "Should it be necessary to think of employing Indian troops, the Secretary or Under-Secretary for India should be one of its members," he added. Equally imperative were "Departmental meetings at the War Office, you and I being present, to see that we have all the stores and supplies ready should we be called upon to embark a Corps d'Armee at short notice."

Certainly, considering the amphibious nature of any overseas expedition, there was a case for closer liaison with the Navy. The Admiralty had not been consulted prior to the despatch of Colonel Home's mission, and only tumbled to its presence in Turkey when Home applied for Drummond's help in selecting landing-stages on the Sea of Marmora.

112. Cambridge to Hardy, pte, 5 December 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/268/4.

This lapse provoked from Ward Hunt the dry comment that "it would be well for War Office & Admiralty to be a little more en rapport in these matters."[113] When Russia finally declared war on Turkey in April 1877, thereby resolving the uncertainty of her action, and presenting Britain with the basis for a clear policy and deliberate measures, a War Office "Mobilisation Committee" came into being at the Duke's insistence, with the Director of Naval Transports as the Admiralty representative.[114] But in December 1876, the situation was less clear: and the measures which Simmons had suggested implied a contingency more remote and a commitment more complete than the Government had yet contemplated in its darkest moments. Moreover, they coincided with an unexpected softening in Russia's attitude towards her threatened occupation of Bulgaria during the diplomatic conversations preliminary to the Constantinople Conference. The result was a refusal to be stampeded into large-scale preparations which themselves might undo the work of the Conference and precipitate the very war they wished to avert.

Hardy had no doubt as to the best mode of proceeding. "It would not be advisable," he wrote to Disraeli on 6 December[115] concerning the Commander-in-Chief's proposal

113. Ward Hunt to Hardy, pte, 20 November 1876, ibid, T501/260.

114. Ellice to Under Secretary of State, 2 April 1877, 'Proceedings etc., of a Confidential Committee assembled at the War Office (under the Instructions of the Secretary of State for War) to consider the arrangements to be made in connection with the Army Corps next for Foreign Service,' WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0738, WOP, W49.

115. Hardy to Disraeli, pte, 6 December 1876, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/134.

for a secret defence committee, "to lay before H.R.H. any special policy, or to show him that none is determined upon." He was clearly embarrassed by the difficulties the engineers were creating by suggesting such expansive schemes, at a time when Salisbury was expected to wring peace out of the Eastern turmoil:

> The Engineers in Turkey want more help, many expensive things preparing here - a further commission to examine the Turkish fortresses. The demands for men & material for the suggested works to defend Constantinople grow. More guns of heavier calibre - fifty per cent more men - a railway for stores, telegraph lines and telegraph wire to make "entanglements" in front of the forts. In short they make out a big business. It is rather embarrassing for me as I can only defer consideration not having it in my power to decide such questions now. We must assume at present that peace may be preserved and we are a long way from seeing that we are to have a place in any war. The ideas of Sir L. Simmons are expanding. Have you any suggestions to make as to my course.

Simmons' recommendations struck Disraeli as being "a very big business, in which the present state of affairs hardly justifies us in embarking," and his reply to Hardy was prompt and decided:[116]

> You must tell HRH that I think a Committee would be premature, & that I will confer with you on the subject on my return to town. We must keep him as quiet as we can, &, certainly, not make him the depository of our plans & speculations. With regard to the Engineers, I would sanction no deviation, at present, from our original instructions & purpose. We shall be wiser in a fortnight.
>
> What are the fortresses they propose to examine? I should disapprove of their touching any on the Danube.
>
> On the whole I should listen to their demands & suggestions, but sanction nothing further, than what we have authorised. I, however, always assume, that, if

116. Disraeli to Hardy, confdl, 8 December 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/266.

required, you would have something like 40,000 men ready if necessary. They may be required for a different purpose from that we originally contemplated, but the fact, that, to this extent, we are ready, may become an important factor in negociations. But this is quite between ourselves.

Simmons however was not easily mollified. A series of secret and confidential letters from Colonel H.T.Siborne, British Commissioner for the Navigation of the Danube, received towards the end of December, had convinced him that Russia's temporising attitude at the Conference was a direct result of an unusual change in weather conditions along the Danube from hard frost to "excessive rain, snow and thaws" which had "seriously injured the roads:[117]

In fact the greater part of them including those in Russia and the Principalities as well as in Turkey, are almost impassable, and the river being open, its passage across it at the few points at which it can be passed may be a serious undertaking; and as the state of the weather would prevent an advance to any great extent to the South of the Danube, it is evident that from a purely military point of view, it would be a very serious blunder to commence warlike operations until the country and the roads through it are in such a state as to admit of a rapid advance....

If Russia can keep the Conference open until the winter rains have dried up in March; and, during the interval, can, by pacific appearances, suspend all preparation on the part of Great Britain, she would then in all probability by rapidity of movement, secure the passes of the Balkan <u>at least</u>, before Great Britain could get her troops out to the East. In fact, Great Britain would not get her troops into the field before such great advantages would have been gained

117. Siborne to Simmons, 7 December 1876; 'Memorandum by Sir Lintorn Simmons relative to a private letter received by him from Col. Siborne, R.E., dated 7 December 1876,' 21 December 1876; 'Memorandum by Sir Lintorn Simmons relative to the Lower Danube,' 28 December 1876; 'Memorandum on the Lower Danube drawn up at the request of H.R.H., the Field Marshal Commanding in Chief,' n.d., <u>Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4</u>.

that it would be almost impossible for her, with Turkey alone, even to deprive Russia of them.

In these circumstances, it was essential that the Government obtain as much information as possible about the Danubian fortresses and Burgas Bay ("the actual state of the defences, their armament and the garrisons necessary to hold them, also as to the probable defence they could make") since they would largely determine the rate of any Russian advance on Constantinople.[118] Hardy agreed; the Foreign Office was found to have no real objection, and Home was authorised to extend his investigations to the Danube:[119] but Lord Salisbury, upon whom the final decision rested, fearing that British activity in "Bourgas, Adrianople or North of the Balkan" might if detected have embarrassing effects upon his negociations, restricted Home to Constantinople and the Gallipoli Peninsula.[120] With the imminent recall of the mission upon the dispersal of the Conference in mid-January, Simmons urged upon Hardy and the Duke of Cambridge that those officers not directly concerned with the inspection of Cyprus, Rhodes and Batoum should return to England "by different routes picking up whatever information they can as to the strength and state of preparation of the Armies and Fortresses" in both southern Russia and

118. Ibid.

119. Hardy to Derby, 6 December 1876, bound vol., 'Letters from Hardy, Smith and Hunt,' Derby Papers; Tenterden to Derby, 19 December 1876, bound vol., 'Letters from Statesmen not in Cabinet,' ibid; Hardy to Disraeli, pte, 20 December 1876, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/136.

120. Home to Simmons, no.17, 15 January 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

Turkey.[121] He proposed that two should go to Odessa, working their way through the Austrian provinces north of Roumania and that three others should visit Varna, Silistria, Schumla, Rustchuk, and the Dobrudscha crossing the Balkans by various passes and returning through Widdin, Belgrade, Bukovina and Transylvania. On 23 January, a telegram was sent to Colonel Home to this effect;[122] and one week later a further telegram was despatched enquiring how far these proposals had been implemented.[123] The forthcoming answer, as we have seen,[124] coincided with Home's despatch on 2 February, startled Simmons; for it showed that under Salisbury's influence the mission had assumed a direction of its own, and had been given tasks which suggested a radical change of policy concerning the defence of Constantinople.

In a memorandum couched in terms of the strongest disapproval, Simmons laid before Hardy a series of objections to any extensive investigations of potential acquisitions carried out under the contingency of partition.[125] Lord Salisbury's written instructions to Home, he declared, were "very different" from those cabled to him for approval by Elliot. Under the new conditions, he wrote, "the duties

121. Memorandum: Simmons to Cambridge and Hardy, 22 January 1877, ibid, PRO/FO 538/3.

122. Simmons to Home, dft tlgm, 23 January 1877, ibid; also no.33, 23 January 1877, PRO/FO 78/2557.

123. Same to same, dft tlgm, 29 January 1877, ibid.

124. Home to Simmons, 1 February 1877, ibid.

125. 'Memorandum by Sir Lintorn Simmons respecting instructions to be sent to Lt.-Colonel Home,' 2 February 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/3.

of these officers must be conducted under considerable risk as they will naturally lead them to the examination of positions which have no bearing whatever on the contingencies of war between Turkey and Russia, and such examination will in all probability give rise to suspicions on the part of the Turkish Government as to the objects in view, which instead of being friendly are directly opposed to Turkish interests." Should the Government concur with Lord Salisbury's ideas, however, Simmons recommended that "precise orders" be at once sent to Colonel Home who "has such vague instructions that interpreted widely they might occupy him and the seven officers under him for months, if not years, and might, considering the unsettled condition of many parts of Turkey, easily lead them into difficulties and give rise to very serious embarrassment." He considered that the danger of a Russian advance via Asiatic Turkey was "so very remote," but that the sudden presence of British officers in such places as Trezibonde, Kars and Erzeroum might cause the Turks to panic. As for Cyprus, Rhodes and Egypt, "they would be better done and at less risk to all concerned independantly by other officers sent from England in a secret way so as not to arouse the suspicions of the Turks." Simmons was particularly worried about the implications of the seizure of Gallipoli. Since the defensive position envisaged by Home would have "no good port" fit for a naval dockyard and arsenal, this would probably necessitate the acquisition of Cyprus or Rhodes, a "second fortress, and garrison, which, if on the scale of Malta, would lead to an expenditure of probably an additional £2,000,000 and a garrison of from 4000 to 6000 men." But the distance from England, and the

proximity to Continental powers with large, mobile armies, together with the likely need to quell native intrigue and insurrection would soon call for a force of at least 20,000 - which, with reliefs, depots etc., would mean setting aside from 50,000 to 60,000 troops, an "element of weakness rather than strength" in the event of a European war, Simmons concluded.

Simmons' refusal at this stage to countenance the idea of a "second Gibralter" seems strangely inconsistent with his recent anxiety over the security of the Mediterranean sea-route, and his insistence two months later upon the need for a coaling station at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. But before Russia's declaration of war in April 1877, the partition of Turkey was a contingency which, however close and real, might well be staved off. To Simmons' mind, the real danger still unquestionably dwelt in a Russian overland advance through Bulgaria to the gates of Constantinople, and since it was Britain's paramount interest to stem this advance at all cost, he strongly deprecated any superfluous examination of positions, clearly unconnected with this prime task, which threatened to endanger the mission and precipitate its recall or expulsion before the northern Turkish defences had been fully investigated. His fears in this regard were magnified by a private letter from Chermside who told him the mission had been refused firmans to travel to their new objectives, and suggested that the Turks "were beginning to suspect us."[126]

126. Chermside to Simmons, 17 January 1877; Home to Simmons, confdl, 20 December 1876, ibid.

The alarmist effect of Simmons' memorandum, buttressed by private letters to Hardy threatening resignation if his recommendations were not accepted, [127] was contagious and deeply felt. "This seems to me so grave & serious a matter," wrote the Duke of Cambridge to Hardy, "that I should like to have your instructions with as little delay as possible so as to communicate at once by telegraph with Lt.Col. Home. I presume, that you would wish to consult the Cabinet upon it or at all events the Prime Minister & the Sect of State for F.A. My own impression is, that it would be very doubtful policy on our part to send those Officers to the several points named by Lord Salisbury, as their presence might involve very grave complications with the Turkish authorities...."[128]

The following morning (3 February), Hardy referred the matter to Derby describing Salisbury's proposals as "too great & dangerous a task"[129] to impose upon Colonel Home. Derby agreed. "I do not like these plans of occupation, 'compensation,' and mixing ourselves up needlessly in the affair," he replied, "if we tell the Russians that Constantinople is not to be touched it will not be. You had better consult the premier on the whole question."[130]

127. An account of Simmons' threatened resignation is in Hardy's private diary, 31 January and 2 February 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

128. Cambridge to Secretary of State, 2 February 1877, ibid, T501/268/4.

129. Hardy to Derby, 3 February 1877, bound vol., 'Letters from Hardy, Smith and Hunt,' Derby Papers.

130. Derby to Hardy, dft, 3 February 1877, bound vol., 'Letters(dfts) to Hardy, Hunt, Carnarvon,' ibid.

Accordingly, a telegram was drafted and despatched by Simmons to Home "to stay proceedings"[131] to "Rhodes, Cyprus or Egypt or other part of the Turkish Empire" until further notice:[132] while the War Minister accompanied by Lord Tenterden went the same afternoon to report the situation to the Prime Minister. "We came to your house," he wrote later, "but you had gone out & without your assent I did not like to interfere so far with Salisbury's orders as to direct all the officers to come home which I think the best plan. Probably the suspension of operations until Salisbury can be consulted will be sufficient. I must add that we shall not have money available for more external surveys as the F.O. is running dry & we have none to spare...."[133] This last observation probably clinched the argument in favour of Colonel Home's return, for there is no available evidence to suggest that Salisbury was consulted further. Three days later therefore, on 7 February, having spent almost exactly three months in the East, Home's mission was ordered to return to England, though "as private individuals...who could not be debarred from using their eyes on their homeward journey," they endeavoured "unostentatiously and quietly, to obtain what information they could."[134]

131. Hardy to Disraeli, 4 February 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/137; Simmons to Home, dft, no.54, 3 February 1877, PRO/FO 78/2557.

132. Ibid; see also no.21, 5 February 1877, Reports, pp.155-6.

133. Hardy to Disraeli, 4 February 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/137.

134. Simmons to Home, dft, no.64, 7 February 1877, PRO/FO 78/2557; Home to Simmons, secret and immediate, 8 February 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2; no.26, 19 March 1877, Reports, p.183.

The reports which were submitted to the War Office over the next two months by the individual members of the mission, and which were subjected to a comprehensive analysis by Simmons on 10 April,[135] in discussing the advantages of Enos, Dedeagatch, Burgas, Batoum and Gallipoli for amphibious landings,[136] in confirming the almost desperate military condition of Turkey,[137] and in correcting the misleading impression concerning Russian military preparations and intentions created by Wellesley's despatches,[138] furnished the Government with its first authentic picture of the relative military positions of Russia, Turkey and Britain which would serve as a basis for future policy. Most important of all was Anstey's report "on the state of the Russian Army on the Pruth and the feeling in Russia on the War Question;" for throughout the winter Wellesley's despatches had described in progressively darker tones "the most lamentable state" of Russia's experimental mobilisation.[139] The

135. 'Memorandum by Inspector-General of Fortifications etc...,' 10 April 1877, Reports, pp.214-22.

136. Memorandum by Col. Home, n.d., PRO/FO 78/2688; Home to Simmons, no.31, 24 March 1877, Reports, pp.222-3; Mansfield to Salisbury, pte, 7 December 1876, PRO/FO 78/2688; Mansfield to Derby, pte, 7 December 1876, bound vol., 'Letters from Col. Mansfield,' Derby Papers; 'Report on the Harbour and Defences of Batoum, 7 February 1877,' encl. in Home to Simmons, no.23, 10 February 1877, Reports, pp.174-80.

137. Home to Simmons, nos.26, 29, 30; 19, 21 and 23 March 1877, Reports, pp.183-96; 202-213; 213-214.

138. Same to same, no.36, 11 April 1877, ibid, p.295.

139. Wellesley to Derby, no.52, 17 December 1876; no.1, 14 January 1877, Cowley Papers, PRO/FC 519/276.

"utmost confusion" had prevailed, and "the most dangerous mistakes" had been made with the result that the Russian Army which had required "almost all the rolling stock in the country" to concentrate on the Turkish frontier was "far weaker than generally supposed" - 118,000 instead of 175,000 as officially announced. It had only two weeks' rations, insufficient transport, incomplete medical services and no boots or sheepskin coats for a winter campaign. Cartridges had been found filled with grease and sand: there was much discontent and indiscipline among the officers and much evidence of speculation and departmental corruption. "The failure of the mobilisation of so small a portion of the Russian Army," wrote Wellesley, "is a matter of immense interest, and it is difficult to conceive what the confusion would be, were Russia obliged suddenly to mobilise her whole army in the event of war with some European Power or Powers." Wellesley accordingly did not "apprehend any present intention on the part of Russia embarking in War with Turkey."[140] Until 11 April, the military attache's secret despatches and his private letters to the Commander-in-Chief continued to emphasise the theme of peace and the general conviction among the Russian military "that it would be wiser to abandon the idea of war, than to ruin the country simply on a question of amour-propre."[141]

Towards the end of November, Mansfield reported to Derby the substance of a conversation with his Russian

140. Ibid.

141. Wellesley to Derby, no.9, secret, 9 February 1877; no.10, secret, 11 February 1877; no.13, secret, 28 February 1877; no.14, 8 March 1877; same to Cambridge, 20 March 1877, ibid; Loftus to Tenterden, pte, 14 February 1877, Tenterden Papers, PRO/FO 363/2.

colleague at Bucharest, Baron Stuat, which seemed to corroborate Wellesley's information:[142]

> He takes a most depressed view of the situation - he says an Anglo-Turkish war could bring nothing but military disaster and financial ruin to Russia; the probability if not the certainty of Russia being unable at no distant date, to meet the obligations of her foreign debts is openly discussed at St. Petersburg; that the ruin in the country is already colossal. He enlarged on the enormous difficulties in a military point of view, that to get an army of 200,000 men even as far as the Danube, was an operation requiring much skill and organization. That the fears of England for Constantinople and the Dardanelles have no foundation, - that as long as the sea is closed, a Russian army with the appliances for seige operations could never get even half way, that prompt movements in a country like Turkey are out of the question, and that with a lengthened campaign the wear and tear of their army would be extreme. Although expressing but a moderate opinion of Turkish seamanship, he admitted that the Turkish fleet unaided could preclude any transport of men or material by sea. Of course he returned again and again to the theme that no reasonable Russian covets the Bosphorus, but the chief part of his words dwelt on the difficulties which must lie in the path of Russia, - and he even contemplated the possibility of this country becoming the theatre of hostilities.

Nevertheless, the War Office remained noticeably less sanguine as to the alleged condition of the Russian Army and therefore as to the prospects of peace. "My news of Russian armaments," wrote Hardy on 5 January,[143] "makes me suspicious of tricky delays and conciliation." Simmons agreed: "I am not quite so sure as people in England seem to be that the mobilisation and concentration have been such a fiasco as some people are too willing to believe and as

142. Mansfield to Derby, pte, 24 November 1876, bound vol., 'Letters from Col. Mansfield,' Derby Papers.

143. Private diary, 5 January 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

the Russians themselves are saying it has been."[144] By January, Mansfield's despatches from Bucharest were at considerable variance from Wellesley's.[145] Russia's mobilised force in Bessarabia numbered 175,000 of whom 60,000 were on the Pruth ready to advance at twelve days' notice; they were well-clothed, "thoroughly furnished in every respect" with "supplies of all sorts in abundance;" the cavalry, artillery and sanitary arrangements were "in excellent condition." By February, it was clear that "the Russian force in Bessarabia actually ready to move...to open the campaign against Turkey on the European side" was "180,000 men, 12,000 cavalry, and 720 guns."[146] An Intelligence Branch summary for February 1877 stated that "the confusion said to have prevailed" during the original mobilisation "was much exaggerated, and was due to the novelty of the experiment, and the inexperience of the railway officials, and would be unlikely to occur again; and, as regards rumours that had been in circulation of defective stores, useless ammunition, empty cartridges, etc., the only thing substantial was, that while there was probably some foundation for such reports, the time that had since elapsed had been well utilised in making good deficiencies:"[147]

Nothing is more remarkable than the conflicting nature of the rumours received...from Bessarabia on the condition of

144. 'Memorandum on the Lower Danube etc...,' n.d., Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4.

145. Mansfield to Salisbury, 7 and 12 January 1877, PRO/FO 78/2688; same to Derby, pte, 30 May 1877, Derby Papers.

146. WO Confdl Paper 0654, 'The Russo-Turkish War, 1877: Operations in Europe,' pp.21-4, WOP.

147. Ibid, pp.16, 30-31.

the Russian Army. These varied between the extremes of inefficiency, confusion and disorganisation on the one hand, and their opposites on the other. As the month of January wore on opinion seemed to lean towards the latter view, and it was held that though undoubtedly the commencement of mobilisation showed many weak points in the system, the energy subsequently put forth in every department had remedied defects; and it was said to be to the interest of Russia that her army should appear in the eyes of Europe less efficient than it really was. There is no doubt that foreigners at Kischinev, newspaper correspondents and others, found few facilities afforded them for obtaining information, but the reports of eyewitnesses as to what they actually did see suggest the idea of a really efficient and formidable army.

One of these eyewitnesses was Major Frank Russell, 14th Hussars, whose observations were later recorded in his Russian Wars with Turkey, and whose "interesting" report to the Intelligence Branch[148] prompted the Duke of Cambridge to suggest to Hardy that Wellesley be sent to South Russia to cut through all the confusion surrounding the condition of the Army of the South. "Evidently the Russians mean war, as I always thought they did," wrote the Commander-in-Chief, "and their Army is in a much better state than people imagine. I suppose it would not do to send Lt.Colonel Wellesley down to the South to have a look at it. If it could be managed it would be very useful & valuable to us to know from him, what is really going on there...."[149] On referring the matter to the Foreign Office,[150] Hardy met a blank refusal. "I think Wellesley ought not to go to the Army of the Pruth

148. Cambridge to Hardy, 8 February 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/268.

149. Ibid.

150. Hardy to Derby, 14 February 1877, Derby Papers.

under present circumstances," wrote Derby, "his position there would be disagreeable, even if the Russians allowed him to go, which possibly they would not. No other attaches are there that we know of. It is better that he should keep quiet just now."[151]

In view of this decision, Anstey's own mission was endowed with a superior importance. In his report, he described how between the beginning of February and the end of March he had visited various Russian headquarters in the Crimea, at Odessa and Kischinev; obtained interviews with the Russian Commander-in-Chief, Grand Duke Nicholas and the four Corps Commanders, General Radetzki, Baron Krudener, Prince Schaxobski and Lt.-General Vanovski; inspected infantry, cavalry and artillery depots; attended manoevres and minor training schemes; and came away with the distinct impression of undoubted eagerness and readiness for war.[152] "Capt. Anstey saw me yesterday," Hardy recorded in his diary on 10 April,[153] "and gave me an account of Russia's preparations and army which seems large and splendidly equipped." There could be no doubt, as Simmons' commentary made clear, what the result of a Russo-Turkish war would be; but in that event the nature and extent of British policy was still largely undefined.

Several conclusions seem clear. The period embraced by Colonel Home's mission (23 October 1876 - 20 April 1877) - the first serious attempt to prepare for war on a Continental

151. Derby to Hardy, dft, 14 February 1877, ibid.

152. Anstey to Home, 4 April 1877, encl. in Home to Simmons, no.36, 11 April 1877, Reports, pp.295-301.

153. Private diary, 10 April 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

scale for almost a century, and the first to be made under the new conditions of warfare with an army in a transitional state of reform - was one of steady confrontation with the realities of military weakness: as in the case of the Prussian wars, British diplomacy proved impotent to avert a European war which threatened its vital interests. The earliest investigations both in India and in Britain had revealed the backward state of the Indian and British armies (in terms of numbers, leadership, supplies and transport) and their inability as they then stood to fight a Continental war. Home's mission confirmed the doubt that in view of the immense disparity between the Russian and Turkish armies, Britain had neither the time nor the men to hold Constantinople by military force alone; and that if Constantinople had to be defended in future as a matter of policy, this could only be done either by the manpower provided by a coalition or alliance or by a purely naval demonstration - which in turn would involve the command of the Mediterranean, the occupation of the Gallipoli Peninsula and the acquisition of a naval base at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Similarly in India it had been shown that if Merv was to be defended, this could only be done by relying upon the moral and diplomatic effects of light mobile forces supported by the auxiliary power of insurrectionary movements and an Afghan alliance until such time as the Indian armies could be reorganised to fight along Continental lines. But whereas in India the struggle between Lytton and his official military advisers had been essentially one of strategy - of the direction and weight of force - in London the issue that had split the Cabinet and the War Office was not over what

military strategy to adopt in war with Russia, but over what policy - by war or other means - British interests could best be defended. For this reason, as the Viceroy reluctantly but clearly saw, Indian military policy was at root conditioned by European and domestic considerations. Disraeli's insistence upon the secrecy of Colonel Home's mission and his refusal to encourage military preparations or to countenance Wolseley's appointment as Frontier Commissioner are clear indications of the limitations he felt placed upon his freedom of action by a dissident Cabinet, a divided country and the unknown direction - whether towards peace or war - of European affairs. His reluctance to institute some form of Cabinet defence committee probably arose partly from a fear that by widening the circle of confidants he might hamper efficiency while prejudicing security, partly because until the Turkish rejection of the London Protocol on 10 April, he did not really believe in the idea that war could not be averted by diplomacy, and partly because any ad hoc defence committee concerned with questions of Indian security would necessarily include Derby and Salisbury - his chief opponents - and because such a committee could do nothing the Cabinet could not do. Moreover, until such time as the Cabinet agreed upon its policy and laid down specific contingencies, any defence committee would be redundant. Disraeli's chief problems therefore on the outbreak of war were firstly to strive for greater Cabinet unanimity; secondly, to enlarge British influence in Turkey; thirdly, to acquire an alliance and league of naval powers which would provide supplementary manpower and freedom of navigation of the Mediterranean; and finally, to improve Britain's military

position by widening the intelligence system, strengthening the Mediterranean garrisons, acquiring a military and naval base at the eastern end of the Mediterranean and if possible occupying the Gallipoli Peninsula as a 'material guarantee.'

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST BALKAN CRISIS,

APRIL 1877 - AUGUST 1877.

The first Balkan crisis had resulted in a British diplomatic mission to Constantinople that for all the ostensible diplomatic manoevres over the next four months had failed to avert war, and a military mission that had shown that Constantinople was beyond the capacity of Britain to defend by military means alone unless and until Britain resorted to mobilisation (which could not be done except in cases of great national imminent peril), employed Turkish or Indian troops, acquired a preventive alliance with some other European power, or declared war on Russia. What was to be done was a simple question requiring a complex answer. The question was no longer how to occupy Constantinople but how best to prevent Russia from doing so. Short of going to war, the only recognised alternatives appeared to be to attempt the defence of Constantinople by naval demonstration alone (a course that required the occupation of Gallipoli, the acquisition of a naval base closer to the Dardanelles than Malta, strengthening the Mediterranean Fleet and garrisons and otherwise providing for the security of Britain's maritime communications in the Mediterranean) or, to forego the idea of direct defence and seek some territorial compensation which would act both as a flank threat and a material guarantee. The occupation of Gallipoli seemed to reconcile both alternatives, but was strategically only justified if naval power alone could prevent a Russian occupation of Constantinople and politically was only possible if the Turks, the Cabinet and the country agreed. On all these points there was considerable diversity of opinion in the Cabinet, War Office, Admiralty, Foreign Office and Embassies abroad.

The Turkish rejection of the London Protocol, Wellesley's report that "a marked change" had come over "the language held by military men in the last few days," and that the Empress and the Ministers of War and Finance were urging war upon a reluctant but wavering Tsar,[1] Loftus's warnings that war was "inevitable" and that "the first cannon shot on the Danube will not only excite the fanaticism of the Musselmans throughout the Turkish Empire: but it may also be re-echoed elsewhere and thus prove to be the spark which will light up a general conflagration, - the result and duration of which it is impossible to foresee,"[2] and Simmons' analysis of the relative military positions of Russia, Turkey and Britain in the East - all combined together to convince Beaconsfield that not a moment should be lost in bringing the Turks and the Cabinet to agree to a British occupation of Gallipoli. As early as 19 March,[3] Northcote had pointed out that "the only chance of a peaceful settlement of Turkish affairs lies in the maintenance of a strong British Embassy not only capable of exercising a salutary influence over the Porte, but also of commanding the confidence of this and other countries." He admitted that even "if you had an Archangel at Constantinople you could not prevent a great number of mishaps and abuses from occurring," but it was now necessary to strengthen "the Intelligence department of the Embassy by adding some special attaches...and to send

1. Wellesley to Derby, no.23, confdl, 11 April 1877, Cowley Papers, PRO/FO 519/124; PRO/FO 65/966.

2. Loftus to Derby, no.134, 28 March 1877, PRO/FO 65/966.

3. Northcote to Derby, confdl, 19 March 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Northcote,' Derby Papers.

out someone with the rank of Ambassador to execute your plans." The choice lay between Sir Augustus Paget and Austen Henry Layard;[4] but the latter, although known to be a difficult colleague and a Philo-Turk, was chosen because he could be "useful at once" and did not "have to learn the job," because of his knowledge of the Eastern Question, and because he was "able, strong and knows the country." His former Liberal association possessed a potential disarming tactical value, while his previous War Office experience would enable him - who was anyway "not too scrupulous" - to grasp the military realities of the situation and to act in the best interests of Indian defence. Layard was issued no specific instructions - probably because the Cabinet could not agree upon any: under ordinary circumstances of Cabinet unanimity and in view of the host of unforeseeable critical contingencies that would have to be dealt with as they arose under close Cabinet guidance, this omission would not perhaps have been unwise; but in the heat of crisis and continued Cabinet division, it proved a frustrating and almost fatal handicap. The War Minister, at least, was not confident of much success.[5]

After discussions with Colonel Home following the Cabinet on 14 April which despatched Layard to Constantinople,[6] Beaconsfield broached the question of Gallipoli three days later to a Cabinet caucus consisting of Hardy, Cairns, Derby

4. Tenterden to Derby, 28 March 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Tenterden,' ibid.

5. Private diary, 15 April 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

6. Ibid; Beaconsfield to Lady Bradford, 14 April 1877, Zetland, Letters, I, p.117.

and Salisbury with inconclusive results.[7] The Lord Chancellor "entirely approved of the measure" suggesting that the expedition should be preceded by a proclamation dissociating it from any Turkish alliance. Hardy foresaw "vast difficulties" but allowed that "if we allow Russia to get to Constantinople with no check the country will condemn us;" he therefore "urged an early Cabinet to give us some notion of what would meet the approbation of all." Derby, on the other hand, while professing agreement in principle, thought any action "premature," and insisted upon the prior sanction of the Porte "otherwise it would figure as the commencement of the scramble for the spoils of the Ottoman Empire, which it certainly did not become England to originate." Salisbury was the most outspoken in his opposition:[8]

> I objected to this proposal very strongly - insisting that such a course would be in effect an alliance with Turkey; that it would be so understood by the people of England, by Russia, and by Turkey herself; that it would take the Russians some time to reach the Balkan, and, that to reach Gallipoli with such artillery as would be formidable to us when there, would take much longer than nine weeks; that there was no necessity for taking any action till Russia had passed the Balkan, or at least had shown an intention to pass it; that even if she did reach Constantinople we could shell her out of it with ease; and that by deferring our action till Russia had manifested a resolution to attack Constantinople, we should run no risk, and should clear ourselves from the suspicion of using our military force to maintain the Turk in Bulgaria. I added that I doubted Russia's intention to attack Constantinople; and I thought that a more probable contingency was that, having beaten the Turk in Bulgaria, she would conclude a favourable treaty with him. In that case, I said, as such

7. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, secret, no.2, 23 April 1877, PRO/CAB 41/8; private diary, 17 April 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

8. Salisbury to Carnarvon, pte, 18 April 1877, Carnarvon Papers, PRO/30/6/8.

a treaty must involve some infraction of the Treaty of Paris, you will be entirely at liberty to take such a course as you may think necessary for England's interest.

Beaconsfield's reaction to this expression of opinion was to ask Hardy to re-examine "the estimates as to the time it would probably take for the Russian army to advance from the Pruth to the vicinity of Constantinople."[9] Hardy referred the matter to Simmons who, interpreting the question widely, produced a lengthy denunciation of the whole Gallipoli policy.[10] He argued that under ideal conditions of weather, supply, transport and weak Turkish opposition, a Russian force of 80,000 men could probably reach Adrianople in ten or eleven weeks and, after detaching a column to seize the batteries on the Gallipoli peninsula, arrive before the Turkish capital three weeks later, 50,000 strong. By seizing the Gallipoli Peninsula, a subsequent British expedition to dislodge the Russians "would become a very difficult and hazardous operation, the success of which would depend on the strength and nature of the opposing forces," the "Russian Mediterranean fleet would find a safe port within the Straits" and "the reasonable result of a peace negociated under such circumstances would be the surrender of the Turkish fleet to the victors, which, if the Russians could man it, would at once make her one of the leading maritime powers in the Mediterranean." While he observed with almost Clausewitzian qualification "that these calculations are based upon data which are imperfectly

9. Beaconsfield to Hardy, confdl, 18 April 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/266.

10. 'Memorandum: a short abstract from the various reports as to the probable time it would take for the Russian Army to advance from the Pruth to the vicinity of Constantinople for the use of the Cabinet,' J.L.A.Simmons, 19 April 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

known, and upon hypotheses which must be accepted as probabilities, but by no means as certainties, depending, as they do, entirely on assumptions which may be seriously affected in numerous ways, by unknown and unforeseen circumstances," and that personally he did not believe the Russians could reach Constantinople "in nearly so short a time," he was strongly opposed to the idea "that a British force should seize and hold the Gallipoli Peninsula and the opposite Asiatic shore" in view of the following considerations:

1. The certainty of free and open communication by sea during the Russian War of 1854-6, owing to the fact that it was waged by the two leading Maritime Powers of the world, British and French ships traversed the seas unarmed with as much security as that with which Russian ships traverse the Caspian. Since the "Alabama" has shown what a single hostile cruiser can do to interrupt communication by sea. Are France, Austria, Italy and Spain certain not to interfere?

2. The force must either land with the consent of, and therefore unopposed by, and in alliance with, the Turks, or it must force a landing and turn the defences, in which case it would be in opposition to the Turks.

3. In the latter case it would be in alliance with the Russians.

4. If forcible possession were taken against the Turks, but not in alliance with the Russians, events might arise in Constantinople, or in the rural districts towards Adrianople, such as a massacre of peasants (I, for my part, do not think this very probable), which would render it very difficult for a British Army and Navy to remain idle spectators within reach. The public opinion of this country and of the civilized world would compel their intervention, that is, if the force were sufficient to admit of it, and, if not, the prestige of Great Britain, as a great power, might suffer loss by her inability to act. Action might lead to the supplanting of Turkish authority when Great Britain might find herself possibly in opposition to and at war with Russia.

5. If Great Britain could take possession of the Dardanelles and peninsula of Gallipoli with a force of about 20,000 men of all arms before the Russians can get there, they could hold it a security against a Russian attack and

would thus bar the passage in and out against all Russian ships, and so far as the Mediterranean was concerned the balance of naval power would remain as at present, but if Russia were permitted to go on to Constantinople, which the mere occupation of Gallipoli would not prevent, and obtain possession of the country, including all its resources, both naval and military, the possession and occupation of the Dardanelles by Great Britain would be a constant menace to Russia and certainly lead to very great efforts to get rid of it. The possession would require extensive permanent defences of a very expensive character (Lt.-Colonel Home calculated their cost at £2,800,000), and considering the great distance from Great Britain; that her communications with it might be interfered with by complications with other Powers; that any Russian attack would be based upon an almost unlimited force raised by conscription; the garrison could never safely be reduced below 20,000 men (British soldiers), and after a few years if Russia acquired the maritime population of nearly 80,000 Greeks on the shores of the Archipelago, and were in possession of a good port outside the Dardanelles, as for instance, Salonica, that garrison even might require to be strengthened....

It might be urged that this number of men can be spared from the force now at home. This, however, is a very dangerous assumption. When the extent of our Indian Empire is considered and the conditions on which we hold it, also that of our Colonial Empire and the necessity of keeping the British Islands secure against attack, it is perfectly certain and beyond all question that the British Army at its present strength cannot undertake any additional permanent duty beyond those it now has, without adding to the risks to which the country would be exposed in the event of war.

It must not be forgotten that the forces of the Military Powers have received enormous development of late years, that naval forces are being created which add to our difficulties, that the organization of despotic countries permits of their being prepared for action with great secrecy and rapidity, and therefore for Great Britain to assume the responsibility of a <u>permanent</u> possession on the Continent of Europe would be like resuming possession of Calais, but with this difference - that instead of its being 20 miles from the support of Great Britain and its resources, it would be between 2,000 and 3,000 miles distant from them.

Lastly, if there is any probability of Great Britain being involved in war, I cannot conceive that any matter can

be more urgently necessary than attention to our coaling stations, which are absolutely defenceless, but upon which the protection of our commerce entirely depends. In the event of a break up of Turkey, a coaling station should be secured - where it is now much required - at the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

In a supplementary memorandum dealing with "the forces and probable operations in Asia Minor,"[11] Simmons argued that while "the difficulties of the country, its unsettled state and the limited resources available for the support of their troops in the long and widespread marches they would have to make," would necessarily prolong the Russian Armenian campaign, any rapid victories (such as the occupation of Kars and Erzeroum) would give Russia "command of the whole of Asia Minor with no obstacles to encounter in their onward march to the Mediterranean and Bosphorus" and a "preponderating influence as an Asiatic Power."

Beaconsfield could scarcely have been happy with these two memoranda which were admittedly founded on the worst case and assumed an early and complete Russian victory in Turkey with all the advantages to the enemy that that would entail. To this extent they were speculative and were not in fact borne out by events. Nevertheless, it was on calculations of this kind, modified and adjusted as the situation developed, that the near Eastern plan of defence had to be based. It was not a promising outlook and before the Cabinet met on 21 April Beaconsfield discussed with Simmons the whole question of Britain's future military policy.[12] But by then his hopes

11. 'Memorandum by Sir Lintorn Simmons on the Forces and Probable Operations in Asia Minor,' 17 April 1877; 'Memorandum by Sir Lintorn Simmons in continuation of above...,' 30 April 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

12. Private diary, 22 April 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

of pursuing the Gallipoli policy had been further damaged by rumours (later verified by Loftus) concerning the movements and objectives of the Russian Mediterranean Fleet. Loftus had telegraphed[13] that although Cronstadt was still closed by ice and would not be open for a week or ten days, orders had been given to have seven ironclads ready for sea by 17 May. They were to be joined by the Russian squadron then in American waters and were "to proceed into the Mediterranean under the command of Grand Duke Constantine." The Admiralty's reaction to this news was characteristically phlegmatic. Loftus's information, Codrington wrote to Hornby,[14] "must be taken for what it is worth. No one here thinks it can be possible to have the ships ready by the 17th May," though "of course" that depended "on the state they were in when the orders were given." The First Lord informed Beaconsfield that there were no Russian ships in the Baltic of any great consequence, that it would take them four weeks to reach Malta and another week to reach the Dardanelles.[15] Nevertheless, since "we have little reliable information about them and their whereabouts...we are going to send two naval attaches to Europe Nicolson and Grenfell one to Paris and one to St.Petersburg both accredited to all the European Courts."[16] As to the objectives of the Russian fleet, Hunt could not "conceive what their mission can be. They may be

13. Loftus to Derby, 25 and 28 April 1877, PRO/FO 65/967.

14. Codrington to Hornby, 1 May 1877, 'Letters received: Admiralty,' Hornby Papers, PHI/118b.

15. Hunt to Beaconsfield, confdl, 21 April 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Hu/92.

16. Codrington to Hornby, 1 May 1877, 'Letters received: Admiralty,' Hornby Papers, PHI/118b.

intended to draw some of the Turkish Fleet out of the Black Sea by blockading or other operations on the coast of Asia Minor or perhaps to stop an Egyptian force going to Turkey. They will hardly try to force the Dardanelles and I don't think it is likely they will blockade Egypt."[17] At the same time, he had taken simple but unostentatious precautions. A reserved squadron of eight ships had been assembled at Plymouth "under Beauchamp Seymour of which Thunderer is one to be ready to watch their movements;"[18] Hornby's Mediterranean fleet had been ordered to cruise eastwards calling at Corfu, Crete and Athens,[19] and had been increased in unarmoured vessels "so that you may be able to have them at Turkish ports singly or otherwise without diminishing the strength of your cruising Ironclad squadron;"[20] finally, measures had been taken "for protecting the entrances of harbours etc in the Mediterranean," where "our fleet might be stationed" in the event "of our taking up a position in the Dardanelles...or being a belligerent."[21] It was left to the Lord Chancellor to point out the implications for the Gallipoli policy.[22] "If Loftus's news is correct,"

17. Hunt to Hornby, confdl, 8 May 1877, ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Hunt to Beaconsfield, confdl, 21 April 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Hu/92.

20. Hunt to Hornby, confdl, 8 May 1877, Hornby Papers, PHI/118b.

21. Hunt to Hardy, confdl, 19 and 25 April; pte, 26 April 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/260.

22. Cairns to Beaconsfield, confdl, 29 April 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ca/207.

Cairns wrote to Beaconsfield, "as to the Ironclads being ordered from the Baltic to the Mediterranean (I can hardly think that without Coaling Depots this would be done) it will seriously alter the aspect of affairs:"

> They would no doubt, even if they did not act on Egypt, establish a blockade across the Hellespont from Besika Bay to where the Railway from Adrianople comes down South to the Coast. If, then, an Expedition to Gallipoli were determined on, we should have to break the blockade and at once make a casus belli with Russia unless she comes to terms. We could never, besides, carry store ships safely to the Aegean if there was a substantial Russian force in the Mediterranean.

These three aspects of "the whole position of Turkey" - probable operations in Bulgaria, Armenia and against Egypt - were discussed at the Cabinet on 21 April "to decide upon our course, if action were to be taken."[23] "The question submitted," Beaconsfield told the Queen in two secret memoranda, was "were we to act, and if so, how. After a discussion of more than two hours, the Cabinet agreed we must act, but how and when, was not then decided." In citing Simmons' opinion that the Russians intended occupying the Dardanelles before they advanced upon Constantinople, however, Hardy had "startled the Cabinet" and "led them to consider the plan of Lord Beaconsfield without the inconvenience of his personally bringing it forward as a project of his own. When the Cabinet meets again, they will virtually assemble to reconsider the same proposal."

Fresh complications arose with the outbreak of war on 24 April, and Layard's telegram suggesting that the Porte be induced to ask or at least allow the Fleet to go to

23. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, nos.1 and 2, secret, 21 and 23 April 1877, PRO/CAB 41/8.

Constantinople.[24] The Foreign Office in particular doubted the usefulness and wisdom of such a move.[25] "This telegram from Layard will require an important decision," minuted Tenterden, "I do not myself see what good the Fleet can do at Constantinople. In 1853 it was wanted to protect the Turkish Fleet in the Black Sea - but arrived too late to stop the battle of Sinope. Now the Turkish Fleet is master of the sea. Of course it would be convenient to have our ships available in the Black Sea to protect our trade but I do not know that this is sufficiently necessary to overcome the objections of sending it there." Northcote was especially averse to occupying the Gallipoli Peninsula or concentrating the Fleet in Aegean waters while leaving Egypt unprotected and recommended the occupation of Crete or "the bodily possession of the Suez Canal" instead.[26] "We ought not to commit England to a course which she cannot pursue to its end," he wrote Beaconsfield immediately after the Cabinet on 21 April, "we ought not to jeopardise greater interests which we might protect for the sake of making a demonstration in support of lesser interests which we probably shall after

24. Layard to Derby, no.329, secret, 24 April 1877, PRO/FO 78/2569.

25. Minute by Tenterden on Derby to Layard, no.15, dft, secret, 25 April 1877, PRO/FO 78/2559.

26. Northcote to Beaconsfield, dft(not sent), 21 April 1877, Iddesleigh Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50018; Northcote to Beaconsfield, confdl, 21 and 24 April 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/N/107/26 and 27; same to Cairns, pte and confdl, 24 April 1877, Cairns Correspondence, vol.8, p.1312. For views concerning an occupation of Egypt, see also E.Dicey, "Our Route to India," Nineteenth Century, I, 1877, pp.665-86; "The Future of Egypt," ibid, II, pp.3-15; "Mr. Gladstone and Our Empire," ibid, II, pp.292-329; W.E.Gladstone, "Aggression on Egypt and Freedom in the East," ibid, II, pp.149-67.

all not be able to protect....In all that we may say or do we must bear in mind that we act in the light of day, and under the eyes of hostile critics at home; and that, if we pursue a line of policy which is disavowed or thwarted by our own countrymen, we may bring about not only failure but very disastrous consequences to England." The seizure of the Dardanelles would lead to a general scramble for spoils, or result in a jealous combination of the Northern Powers against England "bringing about a settlement, exclusive of ourselves, in which our special interests in Asia" would be "very cavalierly treated." It was plain that England could not act without allies, and was only justified in such action if Russia threatened to seize the Gallipoli Peninsula as a last desperate measure to subdue Turkey. "We shall run great risk of disunion," he concluded, "if we do not take full counsel together before anything is done or decided on which commits us to a line of policy which cannot be changed without discredit." The question of the distribution of the Fleet was settled at a "long and stormy" meeting of the Cabinet on 24 April at which Beaconsfield proposed that the Mediterranean Fleet "shd. be sent to Egypt, & that if the Porte requested, (wh. they can now do by Treaty of 1871,) the English Fleet to come up to the Bosphorus, we shd. consent. After resistance from Lds. Derby & Salisbury, finally agreed, that the Mediterranean Fleet shd. immediately re-assemble, visit Alexandria, leave, at least, one Ironclad there, & then proceed at once to Besika Bay. This is as much as Ld. Beaconsfield cd. have hoped on this occasion, but he is resolved to proceed."[27]

27. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 25 April 1877, PRO/CAB 41/8.

Telegrams from St.Petersburg and Constantinople lent urgency to the Prime Minister's demands for immediate action. On 25 April, Layard had confirmed Simmons' apprehensions that "the district of Phillipopolis is one of the richest in European Turkey and that it and the plains of Maritza would afford ample supplies" for an invading army.[28] Moreover, foreign military observers had advised that the Turkish Army was poorly distributed, that "nothing whatever had been done towards constructing the lines for the defence of Constantinople and Adrianople," and that the Russian advance would be quicker than expected.[29] The mobilisation of fresh troops in the Caucasus had led Loftus "to suppose that it is the intention of Russia to carry on war on a great scale in Asia Minor, having perhaps in view an ultimate attack on Constantinople by an unheard-of route." As to Europe, the language reported to him "of Russian society in general although representing no official character leads to the supposition that the hope - if not the intention - is entertained that the Russian Army will avoid as far as possible small engagements and after a pitched battle in the plain push forward with concentrated forces to Constantinople."[30] At yet another and "most important Cabinet" on 28 April, Beaconsfield told the Queen:[31]

28. Derby to Layard, no.6, dft tlgm, 23 April 1877; Hardy to Tenterden, pte, 21 April 1877, PRO/FO 78/2559; Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39144; Layard to Derby, no.336, 25 April 1877, PRO/FO 78/2569.

29. Layard to Derby, no.552, secret, 27 April 1877, PRO/FO 78/2570.

30. Loftus to Derby, no.24, secret, 23 April 1877, PRO/FO 65/966.

31. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, secret, 28 April 1877, PRO/CAB 41/8.

Quite unexpectedly, the Lord Chancellor brought the grave state of affairs before the Cabinet, and said he could no longer rest in peace under the conviction that delay, on our part, in acting, would be fatal to the highest interests of the Empire. It is impossible for a statement to have been more clear, weighty, and impressive - and the effect was great. The Lord Chancellor said, that after giving unbroken consideration to the necessary measures, he was convinced that the proposal of the P. Minister to occupy the Dardanelles was the only one which would meet the exigencies of the situation.

Lord Derby proposed, or rather suggested, as a substitute, that we should inform Russia that her occupation of Constantinople would be a casus belli; but the Cabinet seemed to think that, if Russia were in possession of the Dardanelles and Constantinople, it would be somewhat difficult for England to carry on bellum.

Lord Salisbury, unable to propose any adequate substitute accepted the policy as a necessity, but wished the step to be delayed until the necessity was absolutely apparent.

The Lord Chancellor replied that, according to the statements of the military authorities, we had only now a fortnight in our favour, and that delay was impossible. Finally, it was agreed that the Cabinet should meet again on Tuesday...and that General Sir Lintorn Simmons should attend it.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was clearly uneasy at this decision; and in a long letter to Derby on 29 April,[32] a copy of which was at the same time sent to Beaconsfield, he proposed in Hardy's words "certain diplomatic action to precede our own special determination." He feared that to act "precipitately," and "to act alone, we should expose ourselves to grave misconstruction, should appear to be thrusting ourselves between Russia and Turkey, should run the risk of obtaining incomplete support at home and none

32. Northcote to Derby, confdl, 29 April 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Northcote,' Derby Papers; copy in Hughenden MSS, B/XX/N/107/29; private diary, 3 May 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

at all abroad, and might find ourselves committed to an enterprise which would absorb so much of our strength as to leave us powerless to protect ourselves against greater dangers in other quarters:"

> I have been thinking a great deal about our position which does not seem to me a very satisfactory one. I am much afraid of finding ourselves entangled in a War policy, without allies, without any clear knowledge of the views & intentions of any other Power, and perhaps without even a distinct conception of what we mean to do ourselves and how we are to do it....
>
> The great object of England must be to keep open our highway to the East. As long as this is threatened, or even supposed to be threatened, you cannot have any security for the maintenance of peace. An alarm raised as to the safety of our route to India would excite public so much that we should run great risk of being forced into warlike measures even against our own judgement. And, seriously, I think that if there were any such alarm we should be in duty bound to take the strongest precautions. However desirous we might be to observe absolute neutrality as between Russia and Turkey we could not sit still in the presence of such a danger....

Britain's "true policy" therefore ought to be; firstly, to ask Russia to state categorically the objectives or intended limits of her operations against Turkey at the same time indicating equally unequivocally "what the points were at which we might...feel ourselves obliged to take measures to protect ...if we should consider them to be endangered by the course of the struggle;" secondly, a frank approach to Austria "to join us in guaranteeing that none of the six Powers should occupy Constantinople;" and finally, the immediate bodily possession of the Suez Canal, bribing the Khedive if necessary by "remitting his annuity of £200,000, or buying up his remaining interest."

The combined opposition of Northcote and Simmons

effectively thwarted, for the time being at least, Beaconsfield's demands for immediate action. At the Cabinet of 1 May, Simmons repeated his objections to the Gallipoli scheme;[33] and "after much discussion" for "more than two hours," three resolutions were arrived at "subject to further immediate consideration:" firstly, "that it be declared to Russia that any one of three things would be regarded by England as a casus belli - the occupation of Constantinople, an attack on Egypt, the obstruction of the free passage of the Dardanelles;" secondly, "that an application be addressed to the Mediterranean Powers, France, Italy, Austria, with a view to a combination for the maintenance of the freedom of the navigation of that sea, and the prevention of vexatious blockades and obstructions of commerce;" and finally, "that it be considered under what circumstances, when, and in what manner, should it appear expedient, England shall occupy the Dardanelles...."[34]

These resolutions settled the pattern of policy for the next two months; and in establishing the precedence of diplomatic manoevre over military action, in effectually strengthening the negative resistance of Carnarvon, Derby and Salisbury (which was correspondingly to grow with every week of delay in the Russian advance) and their refusal to consider a vote of credit, delayed the completion of those military preparations which Beaconsfield felt were necessary "to reassure the country, that is alarmed and perplexed; to

33. 'Memorandum of Cabinet Meeting, 2 May 1877,' J.L.A.Simmons, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

34. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 2 May 1877, PRO/CAB 41/8; private diary, 3 May 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

show, that we are in a state not of puzzled inertness, but of preparedness for action; so to assist negociations, which will be constantly cropping up, and place ourselves in a position, if there be eventually a crash, to assume a tone, which will be respected,"[35] thereby forfeiting all opportunity of taking decisive measures when the time arrived. Even those limited precautions which the Government felt able to take - the broadening of the bases of intelligence, the search for a naval base at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, and the creation of machinery for mobilisation - brought their own special problems which complicated the making of a defence policy and rendered its implementation doubly difficult if not impossible.

Although Lyons's warnings from Paris[36] and Loftus's telegrams concerning the Russian Baltic Fleet had resulted in the appointment of two naval attaches to the Courts of Europe with instructions to report upon the general naval policies, construction, armament and fleet movements of France and Russia,[37] the Admiralty's attitude towards increased intelligence was not inspired: in February they had rejected MacDougall's proposal for a joint intelligence branch "for the purpose of collecting and classifying all such information as in the event of war might be required by H.M.G.

35. Beaconsfield to Derby, confdl, 17 June 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Beaconsfield,' Derby Papers.

36. Lyons to Admiralty, 24 April 1877, PRO/ADM 1/6422.

37. 'Memorandum of Instructions, 2 May 1877,' ibid.

with reference either to Home Defence or Foreign Expeditions;"[38] they declined to support Layard's request for a naval attache at Constantinople,[39] and (at Loftus's suggestion) they restricted Grenfell to the German Baltic ports where, by dockyard rumour more than anything else, he succeeded in ascertaining that defects in the speed, manoevring power and armament of the Baltic fleet considerably reduced its immediate battleworthiness.[40]

In marked contrast, as early as August 1876, the War Office had appointed its first military attache, Kemball, to the Turkish armies operating against Servia; in October, it had appointed Colonel W.O.Lennox to accompany Home's mission to Constantinople. On the outbreak of war, Lennox and Kemball had been despatched to the head-quarters of the Turkish armies in Bulgaria and Armenia respectively, and in a secret telegraphic despatch of 27 April alluding to the poor distribution of the Turkish armies, the unfortified condition of Adrianople and Constantinople and the imminent collapse of Turkey, Layard proposed that "if H.M.G. thought it possible and desirable to send some English officers of experience and weight out here, who might influence Turkish counsels before it is too late, it might be of great importance to do so," and he ventured "to mention the name of Sir Collingwood Dickson to Lord Beaconsfield as he is known to the Turks,

38. MacDougall to Hornby, 17 February 1877; 'Memorandum by General MacDougall, 17 February 1877,' 'Letters from Naval Officers,' Hornby Papers, PHI/120a.

39. Layard to Derby, no.541, 30 May 1877, PRO/FO 78/2571; Derby to Layard, dft, no.214, 20 June 1877, PRO/FO 78/2560.

40. Loftus to Derby, no.367, 4 June 1877, PRO/FO 65/967.

and formerly had much influence over them."[41] Although it was Layard's clear intention that Dickson's principal task would be to advise and assist the Turkish military authorities - a role technically inconsistent with a status of strict neutrality - no objection on these grounds was made to his appointment by the Cabinet on 4 May.[42] But the appointment of four additional military attaches - Trotter, McCalmont, Cookson-Fife and Chermside - four days later, and Havelock's observation in the Commons that Lennox had been imparting professional advice to the Turks,[43] caused Salisbury to doubt the wisdom of widening this advisory circle indiscriminately and into the Turkish camps. "I don't like the business at all," he confessed to Derby,[44] "these officers attached to the Staff of the Military Attache appear on the Danube to be constituting themselves into a dry-nurse for the Turkish Generals - giving advice and arranging campaigns." He suggested that the military attaches should be given instructions that their duty was to obtain information only and not to give advice. Although he agreed that "officers so employed should not seem to be taking part in the campaign"

41. Layard to Derby, tlgm, 24 April 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39144; Derby to Layard, dft, no.28, 26 April 1877, PRO/FO 78/2559; Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 26 April 1877, PRO/CAB 41/8; Layard to Derby, no.552, secret, 27 April 1877, PRO/FO 78/2559.

42. Hardy to Derby, 28 April 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Hardy, Hunt and Smith,' Derby Papers; Cambridge to Hardy, 28 April 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/264; private diary, 29 April 1877, ibid, T501/11; Derby to Layard, dft, no.64, 4 May 1877, PRO/FO 78/2559.

43. Hansard, CCXXXIV, 3rd Series, 10 May 1877, c.621.

44. Salisbury to Derby, pte, 10 May 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Salisbury,' Derby Papers.

and that "there must be no appearance of advising the Turkish Government,"[45] Derby, believing that Havelock was "too mad for much mischief," refused to intervene since the matter had been a War Office proposal and had been sanctioned by the Cabinet; but Tenterden was nevertheless careful to point out to Layard that Dickson was "in the same position as General Walker in 1870-71, and other Military Attaches," and that "it would be as well that our Military Attaches did not make too much of a display."[46]

Throughout June and July, Layard freely admitted to Beaconsfield that he found "Sir Collingwood Dickson of much use in communicating with the Turkish military authorities to whom we have been able to give quietly a good deal of important information and many hints," and that he had "made use of that influence that we at present enjoy to get the Porte to take measures to complete the defences of Constantinople and to make various changes in the commanders and positions of the Turkish troops suggested by our military attaches whose hints have been of very great use to me and whose advice is now readily and even eagerly received by the Turkish War Office and Military Authorities."[47] The Foreign Office continued to have no real objection, although "they were a little puzzled how to deal with Sir C.Dickson's reports."

45. Minute of Sanderson to Tenterden on Hardy to Derby, 28 April 1877, bound vol., 'Letters etc...,' ibid; Derby to Salisbury, pte, 10 May 1877, bound vol., 'Letters from Lord Derby,' Salisbury Papers; Derby to Hardy, 24 October 1877, Derby Papers.

46. Tenterden to Layard, 10 May 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39136.

47. Layard to Beaconsfield, pte and secret, 30 June and 29 August 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/L/118 and 126.

"They have been printed and sent to the War Office as we don't like to keep from them any military information," Currie told Layard, "but they go a little near the wind in regard to giving advice to the Turks and perhaps it would be better if he could reserve any allusions to such advice for private letters or separate reports which would be seen by the War Minister only. If it were ever to come out that he had been advising the Turkish War Department as to fortifications etc it might get us into a scrape...."[48]

The crisis in Turkish intelligence however arose not over Dickson but over Lennox. At the time of his appointment as military attache the previous October, Lennox had over thirty years' service, ten years' regimental seniority as Colonel, was third in line for promotion to General rank, and had accepted the post on the erroneous understanding that if war broke out he would become British High Commissioner to the Ottoman Armies, as Simmons had before him.[49] Dickson's appointment, therefore, superceding him as official military adviser to the Legation without a word of previous warning or consultation, and superficially relegating him to the status of the subaltern attaches, rankled bitterly. Thereupon, he refused to acknowledge Dickson as his superior officer, addressed his despatches directly to the Ambassador or to the Foreign Office, declined to communicate with Dickson unless through Layard, and developed an exaggerated sense of the importance and licence of his position.[50] This intolerable

48. Currie to Layard, 20 June 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50013.

49. Lennox to Simmons, 9 November 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1.

50. Ibid; Layard to Derby, 17 October 1877, bound vol., 'Letters from Layard,' Derby Papers; same to Tenterden, 24 October 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

and potentially dangerous situation approached an eruptive state during the crisis which arose in June and July with the Russian crossing of the Danube and penetration to the Balkan. When information and cooperation were vital, Layard was complaining that "Lennox sends me no news of any interest from Bulgaria. He does not seem to get on well with the authorities with whom he is always quarrelling, sending me constant complaints against them. As an Engineer officer, he is too fond of minute details, which are of no great importance at the present critical moment. I know absolutely nothing of what has happened in Bulgaria since the Russians crossed the Danube...."[51] Instead of information, Lennox began to forward proposals which could only be described, as they later were by the Duke of Cambridge, as "very foolish ...and extraordinary views"[52] and which would lend themselves to every kind of misconstruction; namely, that he be given carte-blanche in all his movements, that he "act as parliamentaire between the Turks and Russians under a flag of truce," and that the officers under his command be sent in pairs to the various fortresses about to fall under siege in order to gain experience in fortress warfare.[53] These irregular requests, arriving at a time of great Cabinet perplexity as to the course of British action in the event of the Russians crossing the Balkans, caused considerable stir

51. Layard to Derby, 18 July 1877, ibid.

52. Undated Minute on Simmons' Memorandum on Foreign Office letter of 12 June 1877, 13 June 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1.

53. Layard to Derby, no.160, secret, 11 June 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50013; same to Tenterden, 24 October 1877, ibid, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

in London. The Cabinet naturally did not wish independent and therefore uncontrollable action on the part of impetuous subordinates influencing or precipitating decisions:[54] nor did they wish to provide the Russians with evidence that Britain had been in any way assisting the Turks. Simmons especially deprecated all idea "to send officers to be shut up in any of the fortresses to gain experience:"[55]

> They must either assist the defenders or be idle spectators of the siege. In the former case their presence would constitute an act of war against Russia, and if known to the Russians, the officers on the fall of the fortress would be severely compromised. In the latter case, i.e., if they were mere spectators, they would not obtain the confidence of the Turks who would regard them with a suspicious eye, and their position might become one of difficulty and not impossibly under certain circumstances one in which they might run serious risk of insult from the defenders and moreover whenever the fortress fell the Russians would never believe that they had rendered no assistance to the defenders and they would probably be exposed to the same treatment as if they had assisted in the defence.

These views prevailed: Lennox's activities were severely curtailed; but he remained sensitive and incommunicative and was eventually recalled.[56] But throughout this unhappy episode, the Cabinet were effectually deprived of vital information from the Turkish seat of war.

Although for quite different reasons, a similar situation prevailed in Russia; and had chiefly arisen out of Wellesley's "very embarrassing" exclusion from the confidences of the Russian military authorities and the real

54. Derby to Layard, dft, no.202, 15 June 1877, PRO/FO 78/2560.

55. 'Memorandum by Sir Lintorn Simmons on Foreign Office Letter of 12 June enclosing telegrams respecting Colonel Lennox's movements,' 13 July 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1.

56. Derby to Layard, dft, 7 December 1877, PRO/FO 78/2564.

crucibles of Russian foreign policy and strategy. Owing to some leakage in London and some indiscretions on the part of an English Cabinet Minister (probably Derby) and the French Ambassador, Wellesley's despatches about the "lamentable" Russian November mobilisation, couched in the most unfavourable language, had early in the year become known to the Russians (especially Jomini, head of the Asiatic Department in the Russian Foreign Office and a rabid Anglophobe) and resulted in his general and marked opprobrium in high military society throughout Russia: Wellesley's name, for instance, was ostentatiously omitted from the list of invitations to accompany the Tsar to Kishinev for the manoevres marking the declaration of war on the flimsy pretext that, unlike the German and Austrian military attaches, Wellesley was not also a personal aide-de-camp to the Emperor. This slight, outrageously offensive to the Queen's sense of possession of a royal army, was angrily resented by the British Government whose overtures through Schouvalov and Alderberg, the Court Minister, resulted in temporary appeasement and Wellesley's invitation to join the Army of the Danube in the same capacity as his French colleague, Gaillard. Wellesley accordingly presented himself at the Grand Duke's head-quarters where he was treated to "a most arrogant and overbearing" interview during which he was told that since he had not witnessed the November mobilisation in person his disparaging reports were no more than pernicious lies, that his attendance at grand-ducal field head-quarters was merely on sufferance and that he would be "strictly watched;" in essence that he would be treated virtually as a spy and reduced to the wearing of civilian clothes. "It would be

difficult to exaggerate the insolence of the Grand Duke's manner," wrote Wellesley years later, "whilst delivering this lecture, and when at the conclusion he snapped his fingers it was almost beyond my power to control myself." The Cabinet protested stiffly through Schouvalov, whereupon Gortchakov intervened and arranged that Wellesley should be attached to the imperial, not the grand-ducal, head-quarters.[57]

The consequences of this incident (which under ordinary circumstances would have been considered trivial) upon the formulation of British military policy were not without effect. Until the Russian crossing of the Danube from 27 to 30 June and for some time thereafter the makers of military policy in Whitehall were without a fully accredited representative to the Russian armies at the seat of war, and were accordingly deprived, at a vital stage of the crisis, of a continuous source of essential information concerning the true nature of Russian policies and plans; the condition of the Russian armies and the terrain over which they would move and fight; and the structure of their command, supply and reinforcement systems upon which the tactical conduct of the war would largely depend.[58] Although Mansfield's reports from Bucharest were workmanlike and perceptive, they lacked the authority which long acquaintance with local conditions and wide issues usually bestowed: and the Intelligence Branch weekly summaries

57. Wellesley to Derby, no.27, confdl, 25 April 1877, PRO/FO 65/965; no.37, confdl, 1 June 1877, PRO/FO 65/966; nos.1 and 2, confdl, 22 and 27 June 1877, PRO/FO 65/985; see also Cowley Papers, PRO/FO 519/276; Wellesley, With the Russians, pp.165-200; Soldier-Diplomat, pp.125-50; Sumner, Russia and Balkans, pp.316-7.

58. Wellesley, Soldier-Diplomat, p.134.

monotonously reported that information from the Danube was "very meagre" or "of no importance" throwing little "fresh light on the Russian plans" and leaving the whole Russian situation very much "still unrevealed."[59] The direct result was that the Russian crossing of the Danube, so long out of sight, came in the way of an unsuspected confrontation with all the agitations, exaggerations and suspicions that that entailed.

Wellesley's unsatisfactory relations with, and his efforts to acquire information from the Russian high command was further complicated by its duality of establishment in the field - imperial and grand-ducal - always ambiguous in responsibility and often conflicting over authority. During the greater part of the war, operations in Europe were seriously hampered by the presence in the field of the Emperor and a number of Grand Dukes, notably Nicholas and Michael, who possessed few real qualifications as commanders-in-chief and who fell out continuously with the Ministries of War and Foreign Affairs, but who nevertheless came to be employed largely for reasons of family harmony. "The military disadvantages arising from the existence of two head-quarters," writes Professor Sumner, "were obvious. However much the Tsar might protest that he left the entire command to his brother, it was inevitable that as more and more critical situations arose they could not be met by the Grand Duke without consultation with the Tsar and his staff, and as this included Milutin, whose views were usually sharply divergent

59. See especially WO Confdl Paper 0654, 1-5 May, p.37; 7-12 May, p.43; 13-19 May, p.51; 20-26 May, p.60; 26 May - 2 June, p.67, SSP.

from those of the Grand Duke's G.H.Q. such consultation invariably meant prolonged recriminations."[60] The friction arising out of this virtual duplication of military head-quarters in the field effectively curbed Wellesley's facilities and opportunities for acquiring information: indeed, he complained to Derby that it was "next to useless" being attached to imperial head-quarters since "every effort will be made to prevent the possibility of His Majesty's presence at any engagement with the Turks"[61]- but then this isolation was probably precisely the Russian intention.

Paralleling this situation, and compounding its difficulties, were the ambiguities arising from the circumstance that the diplomatic campaign was waged and handled in no less than four separate quarters: the Tsar, accompanied by Milyutin and Ignatiev, with the Army of the Danube; Gortchakov, shelved with Jomini in Bucharest, where he spent most of his time in senile and compromising "cocettes;"[62] the Grand Duke's diplomatic chancellery; and, finally, 1300 miles from the real centres of events, the Foreign Office under Giers in St.Petersburg "reduced for all important questions to the role of a glorified post office."[63] This widely dispersed and uncoordinated fragmentation of the elements of Russian authority, and therefore of intelligence, aggravated by the severance of Wellesley's underground contacts in St.Petersburg

60. Sumner, Russia and Balkans, p.305.

61. Wellesley to Derby, no.5, most confdl, 11 July 1877, PRO/FO 65/985.

62. Jomini to Giers, 2 July 1877, cited in C. and B.Jelavich, Russia in the East, 1876-1880: The Russo-Turkish War and the Kuldja Crisis as seen through the letters of A.G. Jomini to N.K.Giers, Leiden, Brill, 1959, p.49.

63. Sumner, Russia and Balkans, p.306; Jelavich, op.cit.

and the increasing ascendancy of the military party at the Tsarist Court meant that although the military attache continued to send speculative policy reports, they were no longer so authoritative as they had been. Moreover, Mitchell's synthetic reports from St.Petersburg, which were intended to act as substitutes, were largely condensed translations of Russian newspapers and therefore rather described outdated public opinion than policy - a fact which compelled Loftus from the fastnesses of Lividia to write more forcibly about Russian intentions than he had hitherto done. Yet in spite of this dangerous and potentially calamitous situation, at no time did the Foreign Office, War Office or Cabinet consider replacing Wellesley (an act made difficult by Wellesley's connections and almost impossible by protocol) or increasing his effectiveness with additional attaches at the widespread key-points of Russian authority. The overall result was a virtual bankruptcy of informed professional opinion concerning the nature of Russian policy, plans, preparations and operational capabilities at a time of crucial importance to the formulation of a strong British policy.[64] No probable forecasts could be, or were, included for the guidance of ministers; and in their absence the fulsome despatches of war correspondents such as Forbes, Norman and Brackenbury came to be invested with an inordinate (though not entirely unjustified) power and influence.

Of the seventy-five war correspondents who started the campaign on the Russian side, the three most notable and persistent, MacGahan and Millet of the Daily News and Grant

64. WO Confdl Paper 0654, pp.37,43,51,60 and 67, SSP.

of the Times, were all American.[65] Too much significance should not perhaps be attached to this observation; but it should be noted that all were employed by Liberal newspapers and, as in the case of the American military attache, Captain F.V.Greene,[66] were almost uniformly sympathetic to the Russian cause, To this extent they contributed in no small measure to the general tension through boldly-coloured and detailed optimistic operations reports which stood in stark contrast to those of the war correspondents attached to the Turkish forces, such as Norman, who were apt to be former professional or even practising soldiers and who, perhaps characteristically, tended to view the situation in the worst light and to look too harshly upon the nature of the Turkish war effort. Indeed Norman's despatches from Kemball's Armenian head-quarters, carrying all the weight of his long Indian experience in frontier and mountain warfare, and couched in the most pessimistic terms, were undisguisedly semi-official in character and were so deeply objectionable to the Turks that he was expelled from the Turkish armies and the privilege to use cypher and telegraph withdrawn from all other war correspondents and military attaches (with the curious exception of Lennox) reporting adversely on the Turkish armies.

The development of British military policy, at least until Plevna, therefore took place not so much in a rarified atmosphere as one heavily incensed with the smoldering evidence of Turkish sloth and inefficiency. This produced a correspond-

65. F.V.Greene, The Russian Army and its Campaigns in Turkey in 1877-8, New York, Appleton, 1879, p.x.

66. F.V.Greene, Sketches of Army Life in Russia, New York, Scribner's, 1885.

ingly excessive anxiety for the safety of Constantinople and the Dardanelles and equally great obsession for the preparation of Turkish defence measures and essential fortifications which may well have never arisen, or may have quickly evaporated, had the real intentions of the Russian military authorities and the true condition of their armies been guaged in the same manner as the Turkish.

The second area of British military activity concerned the strengthening of the Mediterranean sea-route. The combined efforts of Simmons, the Governors of Gibralter and Malta, the Director of Naval Contracts, F.W.Rousell and the chief Secretary to the Governor of Malta, Sir Victor Houlton, had resulted in detailed "private and strictly confidential" plans for the provisioning and defence of Malta in case of investment or blockade.[67] Captain Tryon had investigated the naval and military capabilities of Rhodes, Dedeagatch and Salonica as bases of operation against Russia;[68] but Simmons' attempt to secure a naval base in the eastern end of the Mediterranean broke down because of the inability of the War Office and Admiralty to reconcile conflicting require-

67. Von Straubanzee to Carnarvon, 3 November 1876; 'Memorandum on Malta Grain Reserve,' n.d., Carnarvon Papers, PRO/6/8; Cambridge to Hardy, pte, 5 June and 15 November 1876, Cranbrook Papers, T501/268; 'Confidential Memorandum on Steps to be taken for provisioning Malta for six months in case of necessity,' PRO/ADM 1/6435; Admiralty to War Office, 26 June 1876 and 7 February 1877; War Office to Admiralty, 21 November 1876 and 27 March 1877, ibid.

68. 'Reports of Captain Tryon of H.M.S.Raleigh on Capabilities of Salonica, Island of Rhodes and Dedeagatch,' PRO/ADM 1/6409.

ments. In his original memorandum of 27 April,[69] Simmons had stated that one of the essential requirements for a naval base was that "it should be capable of defence by a small force in the absence of the ships of Her Majesty's Fleet, and that unlike Gibralter it should be up an inlet of the sea so that establishments within it and any crippled ship that may be under repair, may be in absolute security from the fire of an enemy's cruiser." "It is evident," he explained, "that under the circumstances contemplated the force for the protection of any harbour must be kept down to the utmost, as its defence would be most necessary when possibly the army might be required for other duties, calling, if the country were at war, for the greatest exertions of which it is capable." In short, ease and cheapness of defensibility should govern its choice. Neither Cyprus, Rhodes nor Crete fulfilled these conditions since "their protection against attack would involve powerful works and a considerable land force." But Scarpanto and Symi seemed to offer worthwhile possibilities, and Simmons wrote that it was "advisable that these and any other harbours which may suggest themselves to the naval authorities" should be examined, with a Royal Engineer officer "to report on their capabilities for defence."

These proposals were at first welcomed by the Admiralty. The First Lord had earlier been "anxious" about Hornby's

69. 'Memorandum by Sir Lintorn Simmons on a Coaling and Refitting Station at the Eastern End of the Mediterranean,' 27 April 1877; 'Question as to a Coaling Station between Malta and Port Said,' PRO/ADM 1/6409; WO Strictly Confidential Papers Relative to a Proposed Coaling Station for Her Majesty's Fleet at the Eastern End of the Mediterranean,' Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/3.

opportunities for coaling since he assumed that Russia would "stop coal going to Turkish waters" and that Hornby would be compelled to refuel in Greek ports.[70] Accordingly on 2 May, Commander Egerton of H.M.S.Salamis, accompanied by Lt.-Colonel J.B.Edwards, R.E., was ordered from Malta, using Simmons' memorandum as his instructions,[71] and after carefully surveying Tristoma(Scarpanto), Alimnia, Vathy(Stampalia) and Pethi(Symi), submitted a joint report on 14 June, advocating Vathy as "answering best to the conditions required, being an excellent harbour, easily defended, and...accessible to vessels in all weathers."[72] Although both Egerton and Hornby had endorsed these findings on the spot,[73] the Admiralty, at the instance of the Hydrographer, Captain F.J.Evans, dissented on the grounds that, from the chart, Port Maltezana, although less defensible, better suited "the requirements of a fleet and transport accomodation," namely, "as to capacity, depth of water, facility for ingress and egress."[74] Both Simmons and Egerton strongly objected to this arbitrary selection, pointing out that Port Maltezana's exposed situation, "its

70. Hunt to Hornby, confdl, 20 April 1877, 'Letters Received: Admiralty,' Hornby Papers, PHI/118b.

71. 'Confidential Memorandum: For the guidance of Commander Egerton, R.N. and Major and Brevet Lt.-Colonel Edwards, R.E.,' 2 May 1877; Admiralty to War Office, secret, 4 May 1877, PRO/ADM 1/6409.

72. 'Joint Report by Captain Egerton, R.N. and Lt.-Colonel Edwards, R.E. on the Selection of a Coaling Station at the Eastern End of the Mediterranean, 14 June 1877,' ibid; Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/3.

73. Hornby to Edwards, 24 July 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

74. 'Observations by Hydrographer etc...and Memoranda by Lords of Admiralty, 30 June-3 July 1877,' no.33, PRO/ADM 1/6409.

advanced position...at the eastern end of the Mediterranean and its proximity to the great naval and military Powers of the Continent" made it injudicious to confide its defence "to a less force than 6,000 men with two batteries of armour-piercing artillery...which, considering the smallness of the army, will be a very serious inconvenience."[75] But the Admiralty insisted that the defence of a mere coaling station - as opposed to a naval base and refitting station which they did not want - did not call for such a powerful force since it was "not probable that this coaling station would be exposed to the attack of heavy armour protected ships," and that "our fleet in the Mediterranean would probably be powerful enough to prevent any such attack." "I should have thought it sufficient," wrote Admiral Hood, "to provide against the desultory attack of one or two vessels with the sole object of attempting to destroy the store of coal."[76] Moreover, Admiral Mends told Simmons, "even if there were a combination of two of the powers (Austria and Italy) against us in the Mediterranean, we could still maintain our communications with a military force at the eastern end...and keep up their supplies" without an intermediate base. Here the matter rested, delayed by Plevna, until the crisis of 1878.

The final area of military preparation lay in the creation of machinery for mobilisation. On the outbreak of

75. 'Memoranda by Col. Edwards and Sir Lintorn Simmons, 5 and 10 July 1877,' PRO/ADM 1/6409; Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/3.

76. 'Secret Memorandum on the Proposed Coaling Station etc...,' 2 August 1877, ibid.

war, the Commander-in-Chief had submitted a formal memorandum to the Secretary of State for War calling for a special review of "the Military requirements of the Empire...with a view to Imperial interests, more particularly as regards the possibility of having to employ troops at the shortest notice:"[77]

> With this view I trust it may be deemed advisable by Her Majesty's Government to have prepared for any such service one Army Corps of 30,000 men which might at any time be embarked in three weeks or within that period. The Regiments to form such a Corps have been recruited up to an Establishment of 850 Rank and File, and are fairly completed in numbers to this extent, though the men are very young. Reserve men and Militia Reserves will be required to be in perfect readiness to complete these Regiments to a War Establishment and transport should be available at the places of embarkation as well as stores to the requisite extent. It is essential in my opinion that no time should be lost in preparing all the necessary details in carrying out this service, the Brigades and Divisions should be formed with the Staff Officers selected for such duties....
>
> Should the necessary details for these duties be too long deferred, it will become a matter of the most serious difficulty to be ready on a sudden emergency arising and it is on this account that I deem it my duty as head of the Army to express a strong opinion in the sense now indicated.

As we have already seen, since the crisis began the Duke of Cambridge had written many such memoranda and letters urging the necessity of assiduous and constant preparedness, but with little apparent result.[78] Moreover, the Duke complained that he was not being given the attention due his office; that he was not allowed to see certain memoranda and reports "from the Military Attaches at Foreign Courts

77. 'Memorandum for Secretary of State,' 24 April 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/268.

78. 'Memorandum for Secretary of State,' 27 November 1876, ibid.

or from our Ministers abroad, which have such very decided references to Military subjects of great, though confidential importance;" and that he was being deliberately excluded from Cabinet discussions.[79] In these circumstances of injured dignity and thwarted influence, as on other occasions, it appears that the Commander-in-Chief appealed to the Queen who had immediately written to Hardy through Ponsonby "a somewhat summary letter"[80] asking "whether in case it were unfortunately necessary...to send an expeditionary force abroad everything is ready to enable the divisions to proceed to their destinations at once." "Are the regiments which would form the Corps ready for immediate embarkation?" ran Ponsonby's thunderous script, "Is all the equipment prepared? And are all the stores and 'materiel' in such condition that they could be at once shipped and sent out?"[81]

This letter was not without result. Although Hardy limply recorded in his diary that "with a peace establishment one can hardly be ready for 'immediate' embarkation of an Army,"[82] he nevertheless urged upon the Cabinet "the need of steady preparation" and was accordingly freed "to take more action."[83] On 2 May, therefore, when the Cabinet agreed upon its provisional war policy, he approved of a memorandum submitted by the Adjutant-General, Sir Charles Ellice, at the

79. Cambridge to Tenterden, pte, 28 March 1877, Tenterden Papers, PRO/FO 363/1; same to Hardy, pte, 29 April 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/268.

80. Private diary, 5 May 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

81. Ponsonby to Hardy, 4 May 1877, ibid, T501/261.

82. Private diary, 5 May 1877, ibid, T501/11.

83. Ibid, 29 April 1877.

instance of the Commander-in-Chief, "strongly" recommending that an inter-departmental committee be assembled "as it is most desirable that all arrangements should be made in connection with the 1st Army Corps for Foreign Service being ready to embark at short notice, together with all the material and stores requisite for that force." This committee, under the presidency of the Adjutant-General, was to consist of the Director of Naval Transport, Director of Artillery and Stores, Quarter-Master-General, Inspector-General of Auxiliary Forces, Director of Supplies and Transport, Director of Clothing and the Director-General Army Medical Department: it is also significant to note that Colonel Home, upon whom would devolve much of the detailed and liaison work, was to act as Secretary.[84]

Several features of this 'Confidential Mobilisation Committee,' as it came to be known, should be noted. As with the Permanent Combined Operations Committee, it was directly subordinate and responsible to the War Minister; but their almost identical membership suggested that in time they might logically merge into a single committee responsible for the overall preparation and administration of overseas expeditions. Nevertheless, under Ellice's direction, the Confidential Mobilisation Committee soon became the orthodox voice of professional military opinion and through the sheer weight of its collective rank and authority threatened to counter and upset Beaconsfield's somewhat secretive habits of relying

84. Ellice to Hardy, 2 May 1877, WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0738, 'Proceedings etc., of a Confidential Committee assembled at the War Office under the instructions of the Secretary of State for War to consider the Arrangements to be made in connection with the Army Corps next for Foreign Service,' I, p.3, SSP.

upon unofficial advice. In an obstructive sense, as will be seen later, it came to play a crucial part in the Government's military policy.

The first sitting of the Committee took place on 5 May when a "complete series" of important and far-reaching proposals were made concerning the mobilisation procedures, provision of horses and the out-fitting of horse-boats, all of which were subsequently approved by the Secretary of State.[85] In sixteen meetings between 5 May and 30 June, the Mobilisation Committee continued to pursue, and if possible to iron out, the many detailed and practical problems that had been uncovered in this first attempt to implement the Mobilisation Scheme, as well as those inherent in the despatch of smaller bodies of 20,000 and 10,000 troops which might conceivably be used for "special service."[86] But it could not in any sense be said that the Army was prepared for war. "The whole arrangements," wrote Ellice, "are simply paper arrangements, and are perfectly untried....There is no officer in the Army who has ever seen a division, much less an Army-Corps, organised as proposed, put together; and few officers of the lower ranks have ever had to do with companies or squadrons of the size that they would have to command in war."[87] Moreover, there were many important gaps still to be filled. No ammunition columns had been formed. There were no surgical or pharmacy wagons available which in Sir William Muir's opinion would render the medical services "very incomplete." No

85. Ibid, pp.49-82.

86. Ibid, p.79.

87. 'Memorandum for H.R.H.,' C.Ellice, 16 October 1877, ibid, p.93.

provision had been made for the carriage of artillery and engineer supplies; or for the training and accomodation of the embodied depot battalions.[88]

Undoubtedly, from Hardy's point of view, the most serious obstacle to continuous realistic preparation was the anticipated cost of the actual mobilisation.[89] It had been estimated by a special sub-committee that to raise and support an army-corps overseas for twelve months would cost £6,745,222(exclusive of £3,500,000 for sea transport);[90] and that to raise and support two army-corps overseas would not only cost annually £21,114,960, exclusive of the cost of sea transport, but would also involve the enlistment of 87,000 men, the completion of the depot battalions and the embodiment of the whole of the militia - measures that could only be justified by a state of imminent or actual war.[91] The effect of these disclosures was heightened by further disturbing evidence which caused "much talk" within the Cabinet:[92] that if extraordinary wastage were to occur through heavy fighting, the second army-corps would go into action only 22,993 strong; the remaining army-corps would be 48,507 below war strength, and the Militia 26,980 below Parliamentary

88. Ibid, pp.55,64 and 94.

89. Private diary, 13 May 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

90. 'Confidential Memorandum and Minute: Army-Corps for Foreign Service; Approximate Estimate of Cost etc...,' 9 May 1877, Carnarvon Papers, PRO/30/6/125.

91. 'Memorandum of Proposed arrangements in case of War, with approximate Estimate of Cost,' 19 June 1877, SSP.

92. Private diary, 13 May 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

quota.[93] All these deficiencies could be made good by resorting to the ballot; but this measure, as Hardy was aware, could only be justified by actual war.[94]

It was against this background of investigation and preparation that overtures were made to Austria "to make a distinct offer of an alliance with her, so that after the passage of the Danube by Russia, if it take place, England and Austria would be prepared with their fleets and armies to assume positions, without declaring war against Russia, which would ensure her withdrawal from the contest."[95] On 11 May, in a review of "the military position of affairs in the East" to consider "whether Great Britain can enter upon a war with Russia single-handed in support of the Turks with a fair prospect of success,"[96] Simmons had concluded that "affairs have gone so far that it is too late to hope even with the utmost force Great Britain can send to the East to keep the field against Russia." All that Britain could do with the limited forces at her disposal was to hold the Dardanelles "on the strict defensive;" but "the action of her navy and army combined acting in Turkey alone cannot, if the Turkish army should be routed, prevent Russia from

93. 'Memorandum of Proposed arrangements etc...,' 19 June 1877, SSP.

94. Private diary, 13 and 29 May 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

95. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, secret, 10 June 1877, PRO/CAB 41/8.

96. 'Memorandum by Lt.-General Sir Lintorn Simmons on the Military Position of Affairs in the East,' 11 May 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1.

entering Constantinople." Clearly a military alliance was necessary. Eight days later, therefore, on 19 May, Derby approached Beust, the Austrian Ambassador, "to consider and discuss a plan of joint action in the event...of a possible seizure of Constantinople by a Russian force." "It may be hoped that the contingency in question is not likely to occur," wrote Derby, "but in matters of such gravity nothing which admits of calculation should be left to chance:"[97]

> It seems to Her Majesty's Government that the naval force of which they can dispose is adequate for the emergency, so far as maritime operations are concerned: but the distance from England of the scene of action and the smallness of the land force available at short notice give peculiar value to the cooperation of a great military Power such as that which Your Excellency represents.

But prospects of its success were not auspicious. Much promise of fruitful discussion was forfeited from the start by the fact that Beaconsfield was both suspect and suspicious or distrustful of the principal negociators on either side - Derby and Beust in London, Andrassy and Buchanan in Vienna. Moreover, as early as October 1876, the British military attache at Vienna, Major Gonne, had informed the Government that Austrians were suspicious of British policy, that they would be reluctant to commit themselves to any form of coalition, and that even were they prepared to do so, they disposed of no effective military force for offensive military operations. The need to retain troops against the possibility of a stab-in-the-back from Italy and against the probability

97. Derby to Beust, 19 May 1877; cited in D.E.Lee, "The Anglo-Austrian Understanding of 1877," Slavonic Review, X, 1931, pp.189-200, 449-65; G.H.Rupp, A Wavering Friendship, Russia and Austria, 1876-1878, Cambridge, H.U.P., 1941, pp.367-398; Sumner, Russia and Balkans, pp.320-1.

of having to quell insurgent Slavic provinces would reduce the Austrian Army to a remnant barely sufficient to protect its own frontiers. "In case of war with Russia," Gonne emphasised, "Austria must fight a defensive campaign and can afford little or no help to an ally in want of Battalions.... Austria will do well to avoid war either single-handed or as an ally." In subsequent despatches over the next six months, Gonne continued to emphasise that without money, field artillery, or a German understanding to check the action of Italy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was "unready for war of any kind."[98] Derby himself doubted "the Austrians being able or willing to move." "They will say and probably think," he wrote Northcote on 19 May,[99] "that they do not think Constantinople threatened: that they have opinions to that effect: and so forth." He suggested to Beaconsfield that since Constantinople was unlikely to be threatened and that the main military action would take place in Asia, Austrian and British interests had little in common. "Austria cares very much for what is done on the Danube, and nothing at all for what is done in Asia. She will therefore press the Russians to go on in Asia, and only make a demonstration in Europe, which is not what we wish. Constantinople is equally important to both countries, but I have never thought and

98. Gonne to Derby, no.39, pt.2, secret, 1 October 1876, encl. in Buchanan to Derby, no.666, 30 September 1876, PRO/FO 7/873; no.41, 4 October 1876, encl. in same to same, no.701, 11 October 1876, PRO/FO 7/874; no.43, 18 October 1876, encl. in same to same, no.734, 19 October 1876, PRO/FO 7/874; no.10, confdl, 14 April 1877, encl. in same to same, no.338, 14 April 1877, PRO/FO 7/900; no.11, confdl, 18 April 1877, encl. in same to same, no.341, 18 April 1877, ibid.

99. Derby to Northcote, 19 May 1877, Iddesleigh Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50022.

do not think either that Constantinople is really threatened, or that Austrian statesmen will suppose it to be so."[100] The Prime Minister replied that he "never thought anything would come" of the negociations, and that he had only resorted to them "because there is a strong party in the Cabinet which does and would agree to nothing until it was tried."[101]

The Gallipoli policy - never far from Beaconsfield's mind - was once more brought sharply to the forefront by the tactics of the Opposition who were moving towards a vote of censure "against the Ministry, whose want of foresight and courage will have compelled us to acquiesce either in a ruinous war, or a humiliating peace,"[102] and by recent despatches from St.Petersburg warning that "the magnitude of the Russian armaments" and the "vast armies in movement in Europe and Asia" was "in harmony with the magnitude of the object in view - which is the subjugation of Turkey to Russian domination and the reduction of the Ottoman Empire to a Russian province," and that the object of Russia's delay in crossing the Danube and of Gortchakov's deferring to answer Derby's circular of 6 May regarding British interests was to lure Britain into a passive attitude until it was too late to prevent an occupation of Constantinople by Russian troops. There could be no doubt that the occupation, if not the acquisition, of Constantinople would soon be effected unless "timely defensive measures" were taken. "I have no hesitation

100. Derby to Beaconsfield, pte, 20 May 1877, bound vol.(dfts), 'Private, Cabinet, To Lord Beaconsfield,' Derby Papers.

101. Beaconsfield to Derby, 22 May 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Beaconsfield,' ibid.

102. Ibid.

in saying," wrote Loftus, "that the passage of the Danube by the vast army now assembled on its banks will be a direct menace to English interests and that it should be the moment when England should take active and immediate measures for ensuring the safety of Constantinople from Russian occupation ....An occupation of Constantinople and the Dardanelles by England for defensive purposes would be the surest means of coming to an understanding with Russia in regard to the future of Turkey...as a measure for ensuring Peace and not for making War - for enabling England to have a commanding voice in the settlement of the Oriental Question and for safeguarding the present and future interests of Great Britain in Europe and in Asia...."[103]

The effect of this despatch, reinforced by private letters from Sir Samuel Baker[104] that Russian ambitions in Asia Minor extended to Batoum, Trebizond, Erzeroum and Smyrna, and aggravated by the non-committal nature of the Austrian reply a week later, was disturbing. Hitherto, Beaconsfield had never placed much trust in the reports of "the Lividian parasite;" but in placing the worst construction upon Russian motives it showed that the Ambassador for once judged the situation in the same light as the Prime Minister, prompting the latter to admit to Derby that "even Loftus sees through Gortk. and Schou."[105] It furthermore provoked Beaconsfield

103. Loftus to Derby, no.253, confdl, and no.266, most confdl, 21 May 1877; no.267, secret, 23 May 1877, PRO/FO 65/966; same to same, pte, 23 May 1877, 'Letters of Lord Loftus,' Derby Papers.

104. Baker to Beaconsfield, pte, 12 and 15 May 1877, Hughenden MSS, 'Eastern Question,' XVI/C/2a.

105. Beaconsfield to Derby, pte, 22 May 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Beaconsfield,' Derby Papers.

to write to Derby[106] and Cairns[107] urging the adoption of a more resolute policy, and to use the latter's reply[108] as a further remonstrance against the Foreign Minister's objections[109] that "the feeling is so strong against war that you would lose more support by asking money for an expedition than you could gain by the seizure of an important military position." The Lord Chancellor felt the situation "to be deeply critical." "We have defined British interests," he wrote, "and said we would protect them: and we are not taking any real step for their protection." It was "quite apparent that Russia is trying to bridge over the next few weeks which will make her safe against any action of ours:"

> She will then be, potentially, mistress of Constantinople, and will arrange the passage of the Straits as she and Germany please, and will snap her fingers at us. Then the Opposition will turn on us,- and our friends will join them - and no mercy will be shown, or allowance made, on the score of the difficulties in our way in the House of Commons. They will say you had a majority of 130, and that you might have done whatever was necessary.

In Cairns' opinion, it would "infinitely be better for the Cabinet to determine on a strong and...a wise step; the occupation of Gallipoli" and further suggested that the Fleet and an army-corps be prepared for such an eventuality.[110] In any case, it would be necessary to have "a Cabinet, and

106. Ibid.

107. Cairns to Beaconsfield, confdl, 24 May 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ca/213.

108. Ibid.

109. Derby to Beaconsfield, pte, 24 May 1877, bound vol., 'Private, Cabinet, To Lord Beaconsfield,' Derby Papers.

110. Cairns to Beaconsfield, confdl, 17 and 24 May, 25 June 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ca/211,213 and 217.

a fresh, and perhaps final review of the situation." These sentiments corresponded closely with Beaconsfield's own; but he felt there would be little point in calling a Cabinet until some of its members returned from abroad and until the contents of the Austrian reply were known.[111] Derby, on his side, in substantial agreement, doubted "the wisdom of 'talking over' things when no action is possible." "Men only work each other up into a state of agitation," was his cool and characteristic rejoinder, "and are then ready to rush into anything rash to relieve it."[112]

Thus matters stood until 1 June when Andrassy's note of 29 May was communicated to the Foreign Office.[113] Its language did little to soften the effect of Loftus's despatches: for it was clear that Austria was not prepared to intervene in the war unless it was absolutely certain that Russia was about to over-ride vital Austrian interests. Andrassy had as yet no cause to believe that Russia would not act in accordance with the secret conventions; but on the other hand it was possible that Russian victories might force the hand of the Tsar and raise the question "whether we are determined and ready to stand up for what we have stated to be our interests with the whole strength of the Monarchy, and, if necessary, by force of arms." Under such conditions an alliance

111. Beaconsfield to Derby, pte, 25 May 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Beaconsfield,' Derby Papers.

112. Derby to Beaconsfield, pte, 26 May 1877, bound vol., 'Private, Cabinet, To Lord Beaconsfield,' ibid. Buckle cites on p.141 an undated letter of similar contents, but this is no longer in the Hughenden MSS.

113. Andrassy to Beust, 29 May 1877, PRO/FO 120/536; SR, X, pp.191-5.

with England might be of decisive importance. On the basis of this negative community of aims, Andrassy was prepared for a confidential exchange of views provided it led to no commitments. Thus the earliest overtures to Austria had not materially altered the question of the Russian threat to Constantinople which was further aggravated by distressing reports on the military condition of Turkey that were beginning to arrive from Layard and Dickson towards the end of May.

By this time the Turks had succeeded in mustering approximately equal numbers to meet the Russian invasion, although they were much scattered, were far less heavily gunned and were fatally lacking in cavalry, offensive spirit and unity of command. The best estimates of the Turkish strengths in Bulgaria made by Lennox, Gonne and Mansfield varied between 160,000 and 180,000 men;[114] in the western Balkans there were approximately another 100,000 and around Constantinople perhaps 20,000 more. The total strength available in Europe similarly varied between 242 battalions and 348, the discrepancy probably resulting from the difficulty of estimating Turkish irregular forces. The reserve manpower was uncertain, but in any case far less than that of the Russians. Accordingly, a number of Polish, Hungarian and Egyptian legions were recruited and the levee widened to include 200,000 Christians.[115] At the same time, units of

114. Lennox to Simmons, pte, 1,2,6 and 8 June 1877; 'Further Memorandum etc...,' 11 May 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1; Gonne to Derby, no.4, 14 December 1876, encl. in Buchanan to Derby, no.880, 19 December 1876, PRO/FO 7/735; WO Confdl Paper 0654, pp.49,56-8,64,79, 84 and 90, SSP.

115. Ibid, p.58.

gendarmarie and Circassians were organised to supplement the regular cavalry.[116] Although the troops in general were described as being "in excellent condition" and "very enthusiastic," they nevertheless suffered from long arrears in pay and a brutal code of discipline - conditions that were to be sharply accentuated by incredibly bad staff-work, the corruption of and personal animosities between commanders and the commonplace intrigue and indecision in Constantinople.[117] Undoubtedly the chief asset of the Turks lay in the control of the Black Sea and the potential use of the Mediterranean and Danubian flotillas which together consisted of eleven sea-going ironclads, five wooden steam frigates, eleven wooden corvettes, seven armoured gunboats and sundry transports, despatch-boats and yachts.[118] Yet throughout the war the Turks signally failed to utilise their sea-power. No effort was made to prevent the capture of or subsequently to destroy the bridge over the Sereth, or otherwise harass and delay the Russian bridging operations. "When we remember the brilliant achievements of the gunboat flotillas improvised under the orders of Commodore Foote and Admiral Porter on our western rivers during the Civil War," wrote the American military attache, "the complete failure of the fine Turkish Navy in this instance becomes all the more apparent." But "the sea-going ships did no more: they never penetrated

116. Ibid, p.79.

117. Ibid, p.58; Layard to Derby, pte, 30 April 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Layard,' Derby Papers; Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

118. Greene, Russian Campaigns, pp.155-6; Daily News War Correspondence, pp.31-50; Sumner, Balkans, p.303; WO Confdl Paper 0654, pp.49,69 and 91, SSP.

to Odessa or any of the Crimean ports, and their only achievements were the bombardment of a few helpless villages on the Caucasian coast."[119]

The most glaring weakness on the Turkish side however was the strategical plan of defence that had earlier worried Colonel Home. It was at once clear that the plan was a fatal imitation of French defensive strategic thought unmodified by the experiences of the Franco-Prussian war. No thought appeared to have been given to the possibility, in spite of ample time and opportunity for reconnaissance, that the Russians might adopt a strategy of initial violence and mass to mask the Quadrilateral fortresses and prepare the way for deep penetrative cavalry raids over the Balkans - a strategy that pointed to the need for an elastic system of defence in depth, the provision of a mobile reserve field force behind the Balkans, and the construction of defence works along the Balkan ridge and before Adrianople, Bulair and Constantinople. The fact that the front had been broken into self-contained spheres of operation suggested the possibility that there was no overall defence plan in existence or any supreme commander appointed to implement one. No consideration appeared to have been given to the strategic employment of sea-power, or to the vital inter-relationship between the Armenian and European theatres of war. The plan in fact seemed to have been drawn up in realistic appreciation of the worst defects of the Turkish military system: its lack of a sufficiently reliable and responsive command structure; the virtual absence of that dependable commissariat system so necessary for the waging of

119. Greene, Russian Campaigns, pp.155-6; Daily News War Correspondence, pp.31-50.

open and siege warfare; the sheer immobility and unmanoevrability of the Turkish armies through a lack of sufficient trained cavalry; and the absence of "an Intelligence Department of any description." The universally acknowledged capacity of the Turkish soldier for entrenched warfare and the usual hazards of war were the only aspects of this plan that could be tallied to the Turks' credit. Finally, it was suggested by Bluhm Pasha that the Ottoman Government, in adopting this plan were "acting deliberately upon the principle that the defence of Turkey south of the Balkans is the affair of all Europe which dare not risk the dangers that would threaten the balance of power in case Constantinople fell into the hands of Russia and that it is useless therefore for the Turks to reserve their means and strength for the defence of a sphere which the enemy cannot attack without immediately drawing a great part of Europe into the conflict in opposition to him."[120]

It soon became apparent from the reports of the military attaches that this was the plan the Turks were determined to adopt. Large garrisons were concentrating in the specified fortress-towns - in early June Ardagh calculated there were 38,000 in Schumla, 50,000 in Widdin, 50,000 at Rustchuk and 15,000 at Silistria - and their dispositions were such that no "efficient resistance" seemed possible. "No large force can be brought to bear quickly on any point at any distance from the fortresses of Schumla, Rustchuk, and Silistria," wrote Lennox on 1 June, "nowhere can we see any preparation

120. Kemball to Layard, no.2, 15 May 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.506, 24 May 1877, PRO/FO 78/2571; Lennox to Layard, no.77, 1 June 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.579, 6 June 1877, PRO/FO 78/2573.

for field movements, or any other military operation except a retreat without impedimenta."[121] Kemball agreed, emphasising the "inability of the Turks to withstand the progress of Russian invasion" because of "the unreadiness which distinguishes all their operations and the manifest inadequacy of their military resources," although "their plans and resolutions are as usual unexceptionable."[122] The comment of the Intelligence summary for mid-May was perhaps a trifle charitable when it suggested that "the ideas of the Turkish commanders as to the defence of the Danube are kept very secret, but they seem to be very confident in their plans, and expect to give the Russians some surprises when the decisive operations commence."[123] But the seriousness of the situation revealed by Lennox and Kemball was not lost upon Dickson and Layard in Constantinople:[124]

> According to these reports (Dickson reported to the Ambassador on 13 June) there appears to be as yet no prepared plan on the part of the Turkish Generals to meet the Russian Armies in the Field after it has crossed the Danube. The great Fortresses it is true have been placed in a very fair state of defence...and I infer that Rustchuk, Widdin, or Silistria would be able to hold out successfully against the Russians; provided the Turkish Generals in command of these strong places are men of energy and ability. But it is the misfortune of the Turkish Army in Bulgaria that it is not prepared to fight in the field: but all its plans seem directed to the defence of Fortresses and strong positions which, if the Russians have as large a force as represented

121. Ibid; see also Lennox's "Report on the state of the Dobrudscha defence,' Layard to Derby, no.584, 8 June 1877, PRO/FO 78/2573; Lennox to Simmons, pte, 1,2,6 and 8 June 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1.

122. Kemball to Layard, no.2, 15 May 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.506, 24 May 1877, PRO/FO 78/2571.

123. WO Confdl Paper 0654, p.58, SSP.

124. Dickson to Layard, no.3, 13 June 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.611, 16 June 1877, PRO/FO 78/2573.

to be now in Roumania (250,000 men), could be besieged or masked by corps d'armee adequate to the task; and a large and powerful army would still be left for the Russian field operations towards the Balkans and in other directions. Several times I understand since (and even before) the commencement of the war have all these important and vital questions been pointed out strongly to the Turkish Government and War Minister by both Turkish officers of ability and Foreign officers long in the Turkish Service, but the necessary steps for organising the Army so as to enable it to offer resistance to a Russian invasion with any chance of success in the Field have been neglected or postponed: it may now be too late to attempt to put things in a better state. I confess what I have heard of the present General in Chief of the Turkish Army on the Danube has not impressed me with any confidence either in his vigour or ability. I have no doubt that Turkish soldiers will fight well...but the want of mobility in the field must tell greatly against it, and if owing to this cause it has to be confined to operating on strong defensive lines only, the Russian advance may be delayed but cannot eventually be stopped.

From the point of view of British interests, the weaknesses of the Turkish plan in neglecting to provide for the possibility of deep Russian cavalry raids in strength heavily underlined the need for improving the field fortifications at Adrianople, Constantinople and Gallipoli. Immediately after his arrival in Constantinople, Layard had been "constantly pressing upon the Turkish Ministers and indirectly upon the Sultan, the great importance of forming lines of defence for the protection of Constantinople and Adrianople against an attack on the part of the Russians."[125] He had pressed these views upon Bluhm Pasha who before Dickson's arrival had acted as a sort of intermediary in military affairs, but nothing had resulted beyond empty

125. Layard to Derby, no.323, 24 April 1877, PRO/FO 78/2569; no.410, confdl, 6 May 1877; no.416, most confdl, 8 May 1877; no.424, 9 May 1877, PRO/FO 78/2581; Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39144.

expressions of earnest.[126] The possibility of influencing Turkish counsels, both in Constantinople and at field headquarters, opened up by the despatch of Dickson and his assistants was quickly exploited by the Ambassador.[127] "Nothing whatever has been done to fortify the entrance to the Peninsula below Gallipoli which completely commands the Dardanelles," Layard wrote to Derby on 23 May, "if the Russians after crossing the Danube should have any great success over the Turks they might with their large force of cavalry make a dash at this Peninsula and there is nothing to prevent their taking possession of it. Were they to do so the Dardanelles would be in their hands and Constantinople too as a matter of course." "The best English authorities" had already pointed this out and "the matter is deserving of the most serious consideration of H.M.G." "The defence of the Gallipoli Peninsula and the formation of a Reserve on this side of the Balkans are matters of grave importance," Layard concluded, "and I shall get Dickson, who is much impressed with the urgency of both measures, to impress upon the Turks the absolute necessity of attending to them without delay. The Porte is gaining precious time by the check which the weather has given its enemy, and it should make the most of it."

Two days later, on 25 May, Dickson's formal presentation to the Sultan was made the occasion for a discussion

126. Layard to Derby, no.417, most confdl, 8 May 1877, PRO/FO 78/2581.

127. Layard to Derby, 9 and 23 May 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Layard,' Derby Papers; Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS. 39130; same to same, no.552, secret, 27 April 1877, ibid.

about the military situation in Asia and Europe during which the military attache "pointed out to His Majesty the great importance of the defensive lines formed by Schumla, Pravadi and Varna and dwelt upon the inadequacy of the measures taken for their defence."[128] By 6 June, Dickson had drawn up "a short memorandum of various military and engineering requirements for the improvement of the Turkish means of defence in their Fortresses and works on the Danube," many of which were "of vital importance."[129] He proposed "that this memorandum, unsigned and non-official, be placed in the hands of the Turkish Minister of War" and that "in a private interview" he could "quietly urge upon him the absolute necessity of endeavouring to supply these wants without delay:"

> These various points include alterations and improvements in works of defence easily made, but of importance; proper supply of ammunition for the Artillery in all the strong places; supplying coal for service of Turkish gunboats on the Danube absolutely necessary; repair, improvement of Roads and Bridges, and taking immediate steps for watching and guarding the Telegraphs to prevent wires being cut or damaged by traitorous persons. To the above I have added a few recommendations concerning the fortification of Pravadi; for providing a proper line of defence between Schumla and Varna for a Corps d'Armee resisting the advance of an enemy upon the Balkan; and also urging the necessity of providing a second line of defence behind the Balkan between Bourgas and Adrianople.

Dickson's despatches, together with Bluhm Pasha's memoire on 'Remargues sur les Conditions principales de succes pour les Armes de Sa Majeste Brittannique dans une guerre eventuelle contre la Russe, ayant le but de defendre l'Empire

128. Same to same, no.521, secret, 25 May 1877, PRO/FO 78/2571.

129. Dickson to Layard, no.2, 6 June 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.583, 6 June 1877, PRO/FO 78/2573.

Ottoman,' were reviewed in two long memoranda by Home and Simmons on 1 and 6 June. They believed that it was "suicidal folly" for the Turks to have adopted a strategical defence plan in anticipation of foreign intervention, and that the "risk incurred by such proceeding was that of a comparatively speedy and total collapse." With this situation in view, Simmons called special attention to the urgent necessity of improving the land defences at Gallipoli and Constantinople, considerations that had been "totally neglected in all the plans of campaign" and entirely lost sight of by the Turks "even for their own purposes, independently of all reference to the possibility of the cooperation of a British army." If the Turks were "so insane" as to adopt a static linear defence without depth or resilience, the Russians would dictate terms on the Bosphorus and "no military power can stop her except it be by a sudden and rapid development of the Austrian army on her line of communication." But if on the contrary they took advantage of the delays imposed by floods to redistribute their field armies on a flexible basis south of the Balkans and prepared Gallipoli and Constantinople for an active defence, Simmons believed there was an "almost certain prospect" of the war being prolonged over the winter into a second campaign, before which the Russians, much reduced by sickness, disease and privation, and fearful of their finances and internal revolution, might be induced "to accept more favourable terms of peace than could otherwise be expected."

These memoranda were forwarded to the Commander-in-

Chief and the War Minister on 6 June;[130] both were probably delivered, or the substance made known, to Beaconsfield the same day. In an accompanying memorandum,[131] the Duke of Cambridge had remarked that while Simmons' views as to "withdrawing the whole Turkish Field Army across the Danube and for the defence of the Passes" appeared strategically sound, politically they would be impossible to carry out. But that did not mean that some measures should not be taken which "notwithstanding the paralysing neutrality in vogue...might tend, if effected, to maintain generally the status quo, and, at the same time, place England in a commanding position when the conditions of peace are discussed." Late in the evening of 6 June, therefore, Beaconsfield wrote to the Ambassador a "strictly personal" secret letter "of the utmost confidence,"[132] describing his anxieties for the security of Gallipoli and Constantinople in the sense of Simmons' memoranda, and asking Layard whether it might be possible to induce the Porte to invite "a military occupation of the Peninsula of Gallipoli by England" as a necessary prelude and safeguard to the presence of the fleet at Constantinople. Time was of "inestimable value" since the "preparation and despatch of the military portion of the expedition might require ten weeks." It could hardly be delayed later than

130. 'Most Confidential Memorandum by Sir J.L.A.Simmons on a memoire by Bluhm Pasha on the best means of defending Turkey from Russian aggression forwarded by Her Majesty's Ambassador 30 April 1877,' 29 May 1877; 'Attached memorandum by Lt.-Colonel Home dated 17 May 1877,' Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

131. 'Memorandum by the Duke of Cambridge,' 1 June 1877, ibid.

132. Beaconsfield to Layard, secret, 6 June 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39136.

the passage of the Danube - which would be an appropriate occasion for the appeal to be made. Much umbrage has been taken at Beaconsfield's supposed unethical conduct in this matter, working high-handedly behind the back of his Foreign Minister, but there can be little doubt that in view of the state of Parliamentary agitation, an indifferent and dispersed Cabinet, the inconclusiveness of the Austrain negociations and the comparative military situations of Russia and Turkey, the Prime Minister was justified in using the prerogative bestowed by his office.

The need for some form of preventive action was made even plainer the following day (8 June) when Schouvalov returned from St. Petersburg bearing Gortchakov's reply to the British note of 6 May and confidential instructions as to Russia's war aims should Britain propose to mediate.[133] In theory, the assurances contained in Gortchakov's note as to the Suez Canal, Egypt, the Persian Gulf and any threat to India seemed satisfactory, but in practice its calculated omissions and the texture of the concomitant peace proposals effectively vetoed much of what was promised. The chief objection turned on the question of the possible occupation of Constantinople and the Straits - a question which Gortchakov had carefully eschewed by obscure and elastic terminology. But while in St. Petersburg, Schouvalov had told Loftus "that it would be impossible to take any engagement which might fetter or strain the military operations without the previous certainty that" before the Russian armies crossed the Balkans, "the Turks

133. Accounts and Papers, 1878, LXXXI, C.1952, no.1; SR, V, pp.422-7; Sumner, Balkans, pp.312-14; Rupp, Wavering Friendship, pp.379-80; Jelavich, Russia in the East, pp.39-45.

would consent to our terms of peace." If they rejected them, Russia would carry on operations until Turkey was compelled to accept a peace, the conditions of which might be different.[134] A temporary occupation of Constantinople and the Straits, in defiance of British interests, remained as an alarming possibility, and who could say what temporary might mean. A certain credibility for the worst fears lay in the context of the peace proposals which decreed, among other things, the creation of an autonomous Bulgarian principality, the evacuation and razing of the Danubian and Quadrilateral fortresses and the acquisition of Batoum and surrounding territory. The Cabinet could hardly have been surprised at these stipulations which had been traditional in Russia's wars against Turkey, and had recently reminded Derby that "they may give more trouble than we expect."[135] The cautious Northcote therefore was quick to notice that they pointed to "several unpleasant eventualities."[136] "As regards the Persian Gulf and generally the British interests in Asia," the acquisition of Batoum contained "something like a threat." With the evacuation and razing of the Danubian fortresses and the creation of a Bulgarian state, there would be nothing "to debar Russia from temporarily occupying Constantinople, and discussing the terms of a settlement from that vantage ground." Within days, Russian war policy, tightening under the grip of military pressure, left no doubt as to its intentions in this matter.

134. Loftus to Derby, no.266, 23 May 1877, PRO/FO 65/966.

135. Derby to Northcote, 19 May 1877, Iddesleigh Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50022; bound vol., 'Letters to Northcote(dfts),' Derby Papers.

136. Northcote to Beaconsfield, 9 June 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/N/36.

The final persuasion of the Tsar by his military advisers to accept the full consequences of Obruchev's plan has been graphically described by Professor Sumner:[137]

> Alexander had left St.Petersburg on 2 June, two days before Schouvalov's departure for London, accompanied by the Tsarevich, Gortchakov, Jomini, and Milyutin. On the 6th he arrived at the Grand Duke Nicholas's head-quarters at Ploeshti in Roumania. Ignatiev was already there, urging on the need for a rapid campaign to be pushed even to Gallipoli and Constantinople; ruling out of court any ideas of a promise not to cross the Balkans or of the subordination of military operations to diplomatic pressure from other powers. The army leaders scarcely needed such incitement: at the very outset of the campaign they obviously would not be inclined to accept the imposition of any limits to their operations and were incensed against Schouvalov and his policy of "la petite paix"....
>
> Thus encouraged, the Grand Duke refused to accept Gortchakov's fait accompli. The conditions must be modified; it was impossible to circumscribe the military sphere of action....The Tsar yielded. 'Mature examination' caused him to require that Bulgaria, both north and south of the Balkans, should form one vassal autonomous state. The ambassadors in London, Vienna and Berlin were to inform the respective governments of this change in the Tsar's conditions. Schouvalov did so on 14th June. The change was tantamount to a withdrawal of the previous conditional engagements not to cross the Balkans.

In London the effect of this alteration in the Russian conditions was aggravated by the Wellesley incident, by reports that a Russian admiral had been despatched to the United States to buy and equip cruisers of the Alabama type to act as commerce-destroyers in the event of war with Great Britain,[138]

137. Sumner, Balkans, p.315.

138. Loftus to Derby, no.286, secret, 29 May 1877, enclosing report by Mitchell, PRO/FO 65/966; see also Buchanan to Derby, no.824, 21 November 1876, PRO/FO 7/735; L.I.Strakhovsky, "Russia's Privateering Projects of 1878," Journal of Modern History, 1935, VII, pp.22-40.

and by alarmist despatches from St.Petersburg and Constantinople which, while inciting the Queen to pour forth italics of advice,[139] did nothing to solidify the Austrian situation or to move the Cabinet to action.

In his despatches and private letters,[140] Loftus reiterated his warnings that the chief object of Russian diplomacy was "to calm and pacify the fears of England and to occupy public attention with pacific assurances until it should be too late for any preventive military action on the part of Great Britain." He therefore urged "the occupation of Constantinople and the Dardanelles as the most important element for ensuring us a commanding voice when Peace is to be concluded:"

> Without it we shall only play a secondary part. I am perfectly certain that if we are not there the Russians will be, and that their occupation will produce a feeling which will lead to a war under the most disadvantageous circumstances to us. By occupying Constantinople we shall prevent Turkey from becoming a Russian Province. We shall establish our prestige in India and Asia and have the support of the whole Mussulman population in those parts. We shall assert the great power of England in the Councils of Europe. We shall be neither strategically nor diplomatically checkmated by Russia - and it can be done at no great cost and probably without even firing a shot. But it must be done in time - before the Russians reach the Balkans - for to be too late would only expose us to ridicule.

In Constantinople, the Ambassador, fighting without the benefit of formal instructions or private direction to

139. Queen Victoria to Beaconsfield, 25 and 27 June 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/B/74-80; G.E.Buckle(ed.), The Letters of Queen Victoria: second series, 1862-1878, London, Murray, 1926, II, pp.547-9.

140. Loftus to Derby, no.330, very confdl, 20 June 1877, PRO/FO 65/967; same to same, pte, 20 June 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Loftus,' Derby Papers.

"maintain the shreds of influence" in the teeth of Turkish suspicion and distrust, and fearful of the implications of the Russian peace conditions upon British interests in India, had already begun to encourage the Turkish mission to Afghanistan, and welcomed the opportunity afforded by Beaconsfield's secret correspondence to urge a policy of "decisive and energetic measures" upon the Government. Not since his appointment had the Foreign Secretary written privately to him; and the complexion of Derby's official utterances and despatches seemed to him to have reduced modern statesmanship to "the most careful avoidance of looking ahead." "Everything in the Turkish question," he complained to Lytton, "was in the greatest confusion, indeed in the most dangerous condition" because public opinion had been "so much misled and misdirected" that the Government had been "unable to lay down and follow a distinct and consistent policy, and are at the mercy of an impassioned or ignorant ranter who may see in a bundle of cabbage leaves an impaled Christian to whose blessed memory the interests of England, of liberty and of the world must be sacrificed." Moreover, the Turkish armies could not be expected to hold out for very long, and Turkey would then be placed "in the position of one of the bazaar dogs worried by a big mastiff, with a number of small curs - Greece, Persia, Servia, Roumania, Montenegro, Italy and Austria - waiting around to fall upon the wretched beast and tear it to bits the moment it gets the worst of the struggle." Once Russia crossed the Danube, peace would become impossible without "an immense amount of bloodshed, and desolation and ruin on all sides," culminating in "a general break-up and anarchy" and a massacre of Christians. A Russian

occupation of Bulgaria would inexorably lead to the dissolution of Turkey in Europe with all that that implied for the security of India and the balance of power in Europe. Actual control of Constantinople meant vicarious control of the Suez Canal unless Britain directly annexed Egypt and permanently maintained a large naval force in the Eastern Mediterranean. Russian acquisition of Batoum and Armenia would give her possession of "the most important part of Asia Minor, the command of the North of Persia, and ultimately a sure base of operations against us" unless by mediation or threats of war this could be averted. Should mediation fail, and England be "determined to deal with such a state of things in a manner adequate to her vast interests she has at stake," Layard wrote to Beaconsfield, there were "certain measures which could be used against Russia;" firstly, "to assist the Turks actively by money and officers and by troops;" secondly, "to make use of Hungary and Gallicia to prevent the active interference of Austria on behalf of Russia, or if necessary even to incite the Hungarians and Gallician Poles to take part against Russia;" thirdly, "to raise the Mohommedan States in Central Asia occupied and threatened by Russia against her;" and fourthly, to prevent Greece from moving or promoting insurrection against Turkey by sending two men-of-war to Piraeus. But whatever policy was decided, be it one of mediation or war, the occupation of Gallipoli and Constantinople was imperative and immediately urgent: the reports of Vice-Consul Maling showed that nothing had been done toward developing their defences, and they might therefore fall

almost overnight to a Russian coup de main.[141]

In spite of the unambiguous nature of the Russian threat in Europe which had provoked these unusually strong despatches from St. Petersburg and Constantinople, the Austrian attitude towards combined action never faltered. The appeals of the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary to the Austrian authorities more clearly to define their position concerning a possible occupation of Constantinople received the disingenuous but no less firm reply that it would be "neither necessary nor expedient to check Russia at the Balkans."[142] On 19 June, in a confidential conversation with Beust,[143] Derby "earnestly" pressed upon him that "according to the latest version of the Russian scheme, a semi-independent Bulgarian State - which as a matter of fact would be a Russian dependency - was meant to extend for a considerable distance south of the Balkans - that the line of defence would in consequence cease to exist - that all the Turkish fortresses within the territory thus set apart were to be destroyed and therefore that the road to Constantinople would be open and unguarded whenever a Russian army was ordered to march there." Since "England would be reluctant to

141. Layard to Lytton, 27 June 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/9; same to Beaconsfield, pte and secret, 20 June 1877, Hughenden MSS, XVI/C/118; Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39136 and 38971; same to Cowley, 13 June 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

142. Andrassy to Beust, secret and confdl, 22 June 1877 (communicated to Derby, 25 June 1877), SR, X, pp.449-53.

143. 'Memorandum of Conversation between Derby and Beust at the Foreign Office,' 19 June 1877, ibid, p.200.

enter into a second Crimean War without an ally...an Austrian refusal to cooperate might therefore very probably lead to, and justify, inaction on our part: whereas if the two countries acted together, there was not only no doubt of success, but no danger of war, since Russia would not provoke the hostility of two leading Powers while already engaged in hostilities."

In its reply six days later (25 June),[144] the Austrian Government seriously pooh-poohed the idea that "there would be imminent danger of Russia's occupying Constantinople the moment she crossed the Balkans," or that if she did she could do so indefinitely in the face of Europe and an Anglo-Austrian combination which could "exercise at any imaginable moment such material force" as would be sufficient to "compel Russia to evacuate Constantinople at the very shortest notice." "The appearance of the British fleet in the Straits, a few days' marches of our army against the Russian line of retreat, would necessitate the immediate retreat of the Russian army," wrote Andrassy, "my conviction in this respect is based on the certainty of a mathmatical problem. Every mile the Russians advance from their base of operations (a very narrow one to start with) increases their difficulties." At the same time, such an occupation "would set in motion all the elements contained in the East on a far greater scale" than Russia could contemplate, ringing her periphery from the Crimea to Central Asia with a sea of insurrection. Under these conditions, present and prospective, Austria's policy was clear. She had no objection to an independent British occupation of Gallipoli, which would necessarily be construed "simply as

144. Andrassy to Beust, secret and confdl, 22 June 1877, ibid.

a protective move." But a parallel Austrian movement towards Roumania (which was the only military operation presently possible) could not be considered in the same precautionary light:

> Such a step as this would in no ways be on a par with, for instance, the occupation of Gallipoli by England. Gallipoli is not and can never be held by Russian vessels. In Roumania, on the contrary, there are Russian troops. In order to occupy that country we would have to attack those troops and to drive them out of the principality. This could not be regarded in the light of a step to protect our interests only, but would be an act of actual warfare. Still more, it would not be an act of ordinary straightforward warfare, but (as we not more than England have attempted to prevent the Russians from occupying the principalities) it would be an unfair act of aggression, a sort of guetapens.
>
> England, owing to her peculiar position as the greatest maritime power, can no doubt afford to act without caring whether Russia will look upon any move on her part as a hostile one or not. A war between these two powers must be confined within certain limits easily to be fixed beforehand. I must admit the justice of the saying which compares the enmity of Great Britain and Russia to the war between the shark and the wolf. They can both show one another their teeth and can injure one another en passant, but in the end each of them retires again to its own native element, and the whole thing is at an end. War between England and Russia is naturally circumscribed by the geographical position of both countries.
>
> Not so between us and Russia. We are immediate neighbours and must live with one another, either on terms of peace or on terms of war. A war between the two empires would not be ended by one campaign. It would be handed down from generation to generation and would probably only end with the destruction or collapse of one of the belligerents. Before embarking in such a struggle there must be reasons of an absolutely binding character, not of a passing one, reasons which make a death struggle inevitable. Only in such a case can a conscientious Government appeal to the country for a supreme effort, risking all to win all.

Thus matters stood at the end of June between Russia, Austria, Turkey and England while on the Danube Russian

bridging operations under Generals Zimmerman, Dragomiroff and Scoboleff had already begun.

The danger point had been reached; the Russian armies whose unexplained delay had earlier caused Simmons to modify his march forecasts and the Turks to ignore Dickson's advice to erect extemporised defences, led by Gourko's advance guard, struck in force across the Danube on 27 June, capturing Beila on 5 July and Tirnova, the key of the Balkan passes, on the 7th. The Queen was aroused to pour forth torrents of italics urging the Prime Minister to compel the resignation of Salisbury, Derby and Carnarvon, and seek a mandate for a "firm, bold line" in the Commons and Lords.[145] But Great Britain was in no position to take prompt measures for effective military intervention: the activities of the Mobilisation Committee, characterised more by enquiry than preparation, had revealed prohibitive costs and equipment shortages in mustering a single army-corps for expeditionary purposes and grave weaknesses in the mobilisation scheme - features that could not be compensated for by any Austrian alliance; inter-service dissension had prevented agreement on a suitable naval base at the eastern end of the Mediterranean; the intelligence situation in Russia and Turkey left much to be desired. Moreover, as Beaconsfield told the Queen, it was impossible "to obtain a vote of men and money so long as the country remained in a state of neutrality;" and even this could not be used for expeditionary purposes on Turkish soil without the permission of the Porte except "as their avowed

145. Queen Victoria to Beaconsfield, confdl, 25 and 27 June 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/277,278 and 279; Buckle, Life, VI, pp.143-4.

allies."[146] Salisbury had pointed out earlier that "so long as the Ottoman dynasty remains upright at Constantinople, we can neither establish ourselves at Crete, or on the Dardanelles, or at Batoum, or at the head of the Persian Gulf. We must sit idly looking on."[147] All these difficulties would be removed "if we declared war against Russia but there are not three men in the Cabinet who are prepared to advise that step." What then was to be done?

At the Cabinet which gathered at Beaconsfield's bedside at Hughenden on 30 June, it was decided to invite Austria to resolve the secret Anglo-Austrian conversations into "some more definite and distinct form" by joining in a protocol to prevent Russia occupying Constantinople and other points, to despatch a naval observation squadron to Besika Bay, and "largely" to strengthen the Mediterranean fleet with four ironclads and two enterprising Captains.[148] These decisions were taken in the absence of the First Lord of the Admiralty and without consulting professional military advice; but it was probably just as well for there was no unanimity in War Office proposals. The Duke of Cambridge, for instance, calculating that the Russian armies would reach Constantinople by 28 August urged the immediate occupation of Gallipoli by 20,000 men supported by the Fleet.[149] Simmons impartially

146. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, confdl and secret, 28 June 1877, ibid, B/XIX/C/279.

147. Salisbury to Beaconsfield, confdl, 11 March 1877, ibid, B/XX/Ce/202.

148. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 30 June 1877, PRO/CAB 41/8.

149. Cambridge to Hardy, 'Confidential Memorandum for Secretary of State,' 3 July 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/268.

presented the advantages and disadvantages to "Russia, Turkey and England of a British occupation of Gallipoli" without stressing any particular course of action:[150] while a British occupation would provide a base for future operations and a potential flank threat to Russian lines of communication behind Constantinople which could not be ignored, would close the Sea of Marmara and allow the Turks to supply and reinforce their beleaguered capital, and would furnish a diplomatic bargaining counter for the control of the Straits and the disposition of the Turkish fleet, it would also involve questions of communications, timing and means of accomplishment, arrangements for the creation and maintenance of a neutral zone and its "absolute government" while under occupation, and a promise to retire at the end of the war. Finally, the Financial Secretary at the War Office, Colonel F.A.Stanley, after collaboration with Colonel Home, argued that the systematic obstruction of Gladstone and the Irish Home Rule party, by delaying a vote of supplies from three to four weeks, made it impossible to despatch an expeditionary force in time, and that the Cabinet's only recourse was to strengthen the Mediterranean garrisons and await events.[151] This loose collection of ideas appears to have been discussed in Cabinet on 5 July but without conclusive results: "we shall have to come to definite plans yet," wrote the War Minister.[152]

150. 'Memorandum by Sir Lintorn Simmons on the Effect on Russia, Turkey and England of a British occupation of Gallipoli,' 5 July 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/3.

151. 'Memorandum by F.A.Stanley to H.R.H., the Duke of Cambridge as to the Measures necessary should an Eastern Expedition be decided upon,' 4 July 1877, Carnarvon Papers, PRO/30/6/125.

152. Private diary, 5 July 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

The need for such plans was emphasised by events that were gathering elsewhere. After crossing the Danube, Gourko's instructions had been firstly "to advance in the direction of Tirnova and Selvi with a view to discovering the enemy's position, finding out what roads there are into the mountains, and the condition of the passes of the Balkans, and preparing for an advance into the mountains." Subsequently, upon a special order from the Commander-in-Chief, his force was "to push its advance further, and endeavour to seize the passes of the Balkans and to push its cavalry still further forward, with a view to raising the Bulgarian population in revolt, supporting it, and scattering the Turkish detachments, if such are met with in no great strength." When this was accomplished, the roads were to be put "in such a state as will allow of transport trains and heavy impedimenta crossing the mountains."[153] The capture of Tirnova on 7 July by Gourko and Prince Eugene completed the first phase of these operations, and, in the opinion of the American military attache, "gave the Russians control of the highroads leading westward from the Quadrilateral and threw the whole defensive line of the Yantra into their power."[154] It split the Turkish defence system at its most vital joint, causing the abandonment of much ammunition, arms and stores and accelerated a cumulative tide of Turkish rout, disaster and panic. It caused Layard and Hornby - conscious of the vital importance of the security of the Dardanelles for naval operations in the Black and Marmara Seas - to urge the "absolute necessity" of occupying

153. Epauchin, Gourko's Advance Guard, pp.4-8.

154. Greene, Russian Campaigns, pp.163-84.

Gallipoli - a stroke which with Turkish successes in Asia Minor would encourage the Turks to persist in a vigorous defence, would go far towards averting the imminent reprisal warfare between Christian and Moslem, and damaging Russian prestige in Central Asia, Turkestan and India, and "might even conduce to peace by showing the Russians that there were certain limits beyond which we were determined that they should not go."[155] It caused Wellesley to report at length upon the growing intoxication of the Russian military party and Emperor (already inflamed by the British counter-demonstration in sending the fleet to Besika Bay) with "hitherto trifling military success;" and that "the only chance of preventing an advance on the Turkish capital" was "the signature of peace north of the Balkans."[156]

These events undoubtedly strengthened Beaconsfield's hand. On 7 July, two additional military attaches - Layard and Winton - were sent out to replace Lennox in Bulgaria;[157] on the 9th, Fife was ordered to verify the reports of Vice-Consul Maling and Archibald Forbes, the Daily News War Correspondent, concerning "the state of preparation of the works for the defence of Gallipoli;"[158] the Mobilisation Committee was ordered on the 11th to consider the steps "necessary to raise the garrisons of Gibralter and Malta to a strength of

155. Layard to Beaconsfield, pte and secret, 10 and 11 July 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/L/107/120-21.

156. Wellesley to Derby, no.5, most confdl, 11 July 1877, PRO/FO 65/985.

157. Derby to Layard, dft, no.288, 7 July 1877, PRO/FO 78/2561.

158. Layard to Beaconsfield, pte and secret, 11 July 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/L/107/121; Fife, Armies of Balkans, p.2.

two Divisions;"[159] on the 12th, Hardy and Richmond were "to examine Admiral Commerell and others on the approaches to Constantinople" to determine whether the fleet alone could prevent the Russians entering the capital;[160] and finally, a "very formal and authoritative" note was to be addressed to Russia warning that any attempt to occupy Constantinople would free the British Government to adopt any measures they might think fit.[161] Nevertheless, it was clear that Great Britain in view of the Austrian refusal to join in a protocol was powerless to oppose such an attempt (and must agree to a temporary occupation) unless the Fleet could do so alone: and on this there was a divergence of views.

The idea of using naval force alone, or until such time as military forces could be brought from the Mediterranean garrisons, appears to have originated with Lord John Manners during a conversation with Commerell before the Cabinet on 12 July.[162] "The Fleet at Constantinople would be able to render valuable fighting assistance to the defence of the City," Manners reported Commerell as saying, "if thought necessary a body of 5,000 Blue Jackets and Marines could be sent ashore forming a highly disciplined and most effective force of artillerists who could by themselves maintain a defensive position for a considerable time. But important as would be the material assistance so rendered by

159. WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0738, pp.83-4, SSP.

160. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 12 July 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/280.

161. Ibid.

162. Manners to Beaconsfield, confdl, 12 July 1877, ibid, B/XX/M/222.

the ships, and by that detached force, he estimates far higher the moral effect which would be produced by the presence of the Fleet at Constantinople and lastly, although of course he would prefer that the Gallipoli lines should be in our, or in friendly hands, he derided the idea of the Fleet being seriously impeded in its movements by them even if they were held by Russians...." During the Cabinet, Hardy, Richmond and Cairns, followed by the remainder of their colleagues except Manners and Beach, vigorously combatted Beaconsfield's proposal to make the Russian occupation of Constantinople a casus belli before it was certain that the Fleet could in fact "prevent the Russian invasion."[163] Their interview the following day with Admiral Sir Hastings Yelverton, the First Sea Lord, who "knew every hole and corner of the Mediterranean" having served there fifteen years, and who thought Commerell was not "a good authority on these points," confirmed their apprehensions and justified their opposition in Cabinet. "If Gallipoli were in the hands of Russia," they reported to Beaconsfield on 14 July,[164] "the fleet might run the gauntlet unless very heavy guns were in position but torpedoes might make it hazardous. A fleet at Constantinople could do nothing against an attack on the land side of that City. On the heights they would laugh at naval shot and shell." As for using marines as a land force, there were only 782 in the Mediterranean and these were ill-equipped to act as infantry and were anyway needed on board ship. From

163. Private diary, 16 July 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11; Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 16 July 1877, ibid, B/XIX/C/282.

164. Richmond to Beaconsfield, confdl, 14 July 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Le/144; Hardy to same, pte, 14 July 1877, ibid, B/XX/Ha/142.

the waters of Homburg, Hunt concurred in these views.[165]

Moreover, fresh opposition had arisen in an unexpected quarter to the augmentation of the Mediterranean garrisons. The Mobilisation Committee believed that although such an increase placed "a field force nearer the scene of probable action," it could "only be of value so long as vessels for its conveyance to the possible seat of operations" were "kept at Malta and Gibralter." Demurrage costs, loss of time in landing and embarking expeditionary forces at the Mediterranean bases, the general unhealthiness and absence of vacant barrack accommodation at those stations suggested an alternative policy: "to form two Divisions on a war footing at once in England, at such convenient places as may enable them to be embarked at a moment's notice."[166] Hardy supported this proposal. "The confidential Committee," he wrote Beaconsfield on 12 July, "considered with great care the proposal to send troops to Malta and Gibralter and came to the conclusion that nothing would be gained unless all stores etc were combined with the men and transport kept in readiness at the two points for immediate use:"[167]

I have seen the Adjutant-General this morning and he does not think time or expense would be saved - that England would be a better base of operations and that preparations could be more effectively made here. The almost impossibility of having horses at either Malta or Gibralter weighs much against the scheme as a large number would be required. It comes to this that there would be much talk and no real advantage. Under these circumstances, it appears best to suspend

165. Hunt to Northcote, 6,12 and 13 July 1877, Iddesleigh Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50044.

166. WO Strictly confdl Paper 0738, pp.83-4, SSP.

167. Hardy to Beaconsfield, pte, 12 July 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/141.

action and continue to work quietly at home.

The effect of this professional opposition - which threatened effectually to neutralise active naval and military measures to prevent a Russian occupation of Constantinople - was to produce a violent reaction on the part of the Queen who urged Beaconsfield to override his professional advisers and prepare to seize the Dardanelles. The Lord Chancellor had told her after the Cabinet of 12 July "that the temporary occupation of Constantinople...would not, or could not, be prevented! The Queen expressed her great astonishment and her extreme vexation and alarm at this and must solemnly repeat, that if we allow this, England...would no longer exist as a great Power, and that the Government itself could not exist, which permitted this!!" She had consulted "Sir Howard Elphinstone, who is a first-rate Engineer Officer, whether we could defend Gallipoli by the Fleet only...and he said impossible! it would only require a small force, but the troops must be on board the Fleet to act. Not a minute should be lost, and we are delaying day after day, and week after week, and the danger is at hand! We shall have to fight for our own interests when it is too late!...We must be prepared."[168] In his reply the following day, Beaconsfield elaborated at some length upon the Cabinet's rather than the professionals' opposition to a purely naval policy, emphasising that in "the present state of neutrality" neither a naval demonstration nor an occupation of Gallipoli would "have prevented the occupation of Constantinople were the Russians strong enough to effect it," and that his sole object in wishing to occupy Gallipoli

168. Queen Victoria to Beaconsfield, 15 July 1877, ibid, B/XIX/C/281.

was to give "us a commanding position at the time of negociations for peace, which would have ensured the restoration of Constantinople by the Russians and maintained untouched England's present position in the Mediterranean."[169] But the Queen, in spite of a grudging admission that Russia could only be stopped by a declaration of war, was not mollified: "shocked and bitterly disappointed" at the conduct of the Cabinet, and determined that "nothing should prevent our sending the fleet to Constantinople," she had invited Commerell and Simmons to dine with her to enlist their support in putting pressure upon the Cabinet.[170] On 17 July, she wrote Beaconsfield that it was "most important" that he, "if not the Cabinet should see Sir L.Simmons and hear his opinions as to the dangers and possibilities of doing anything." "Pray send for him and see him at once," wrote the Queen, "to go to Gallipoli and hold it seems the only thing to do - and if we do not do this, the Fleet may, he says, be unable to go up to Constantinople when its service may be necessary...and if the Russians once hold Gallipoli our Fleet can't move. This is the contingency which seems to the General to make the holding of Gallipoli all-important and so very necessary...."[171]

These representations, coupled with Fife's reports that nothing had been done to fortify the Dardanelles, were deployed by Beaconsfield "with great effect" at the Cabinet

169. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 16 July 1877, ibid, B/XIX/C/282,

170. Queen Victoria to Beaconsfield, 16 July 1877, ibid, B/XIX/C/284.

171. Same to same, 17 July 1877, ibid, B/XIX/B/817.

on 17 July when it was decided, under the threat that "if the Cabinet again change their minds, he would have to find another," that if the Russians should occupy Constantinople without arranging for their immediate retirement, it would be necessary to declare war. Moreover, the Turks were to be advised "to hasten their fortifications" at Gallipoli.[172] If the Queen's account of her conversation with Beaconsfield is to be believed, he had told her that "in 3 days 5000 could be sent to increase the garrisons,...that every effort should be made to be prepared, even for Gallipoli if the Russians did not make a dash at Constantinople," and that the objections raised by the 'Military Committee of General Officers' to increasing the Mediterranean garrisons because of insufficient transport had been overcome by Salisbury's unexpected offer of "three large Indian troopships which could take 5000 men at 3 days' notice."[173] Writing to thank Salisbury for his unsolicited support against the opposition of the Secretary of War, Beaconsfield declared himself more and more convinced of the desirability of sending troops into the Mediterranean. "It would have a great effect on the Continent, and like every warlike move of England, tend to peace."[174] Salisbury, on his part, thought "a reinforcement at Malta will do much good both at home and abroad. It will make the Russians

172. Queen Victoria's Journal, 17 July 1877, Buckle, Letters, p.539.

173. Queen Victoria to Beaconsfield, 20 July 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/B/820.

174. Beaconsfield to Salisbury, 18 July 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Disraeli,' Salisbury Papers.

hesitate without making the Turks unreasonable."[175] Accordingly, the same day (18 July) the Mobilisation Committee was ordered to investigate the preparations necessary "to have a corps of 10,000 men most readily available for service at the east end of the Mediterranean."[176] But as before, the Mobilisation Committee produced a catalogue of objections: there were barely sufficient facilities at Malta for accommodating 3,000 infantry, but none at all for accommodating cavalry, artillery or transport; to concentrate a striking force in the eastern Mediterranean while maintaining a substantial garrison at Malta would require the reinforcement of 7,102 troops, twenty transports and three to four weeks in time. Instead, they recommended "completing the battalions of Infantry, Cavalry regiments, batteries of Artillery, and companies of Engineers to a war footing, the purchase without delay of the Hospital Clothing and Hospital Equipments now deficient, and the concentration of the troops first for foreign service to some convenient place, and expanding the Transport Companies for active service. By taking these steps at once the Committee believe that a force of 10,000 men ready to embark at a week's notice may be kept in readiness."[177]

Meanwhile, the course of the war in Turkey served to emphasise the gravity of this obstructionism. By the third week in July, it was estimated that almost 150,000 Russian troops had already crossed the Danube; Nicopolis had fallen; and Gourko had secured the Shipka Pass on the south side of

175. Salisbury to Beaconsfield, ptc, 18 July 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ce/228.

176. WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0738, pp.84-5, SSP.

177. Ibid.

the Balkans. These events "caused a panic at Constantinople and created a good deal of excitement throughout Europe;"[178] but in doing so, they obscured the scattered nature of the Russian forces which were weaker than supposed, the tenuous character of their communications which were now hampered by heavy rains and Roumanian reprisals, the dissensions among the Russian high command, the significance of Suleiman Pasha's passage from Montenegro to Enos, and the first coincident Turkish victory at Plevna. They caused Layard, in a flurry of telegrams and near-illegible letters, to insist that the British occupy Gallipoli as the only means of securing some negociating power and of mitigating the Turkish sense of abandonment and desperation which threatened to precipitate a Turkish massacre of Christians;[179] to send Captain Fife to Adrianople "to obtain all possible information as to the movements, probable designs and amount of troops of the Russians on this side of the Balkans;"[180] and to warn Hornby, in view of the "ominous silence" from London, to prepare for the possibility of naval action in the Black Sea.[181] Unless England intervened, Layard wrote Derby on 20 July, "Russia will either dictate a ruinous peace to Turkey at Adrianople or will advance upon Constantinople. The consequences to England will be incalculable."[182] The critical nature of the

178. WO Confdl Paper 0654, p.114, SSP.

179. Layard to Derby, 18 and 20 July 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Layard,' Derby Papers; same to Beaconsfield, pte and secret, 25 July 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/L/122.

180. Ibid; Fife, Armies of Balkans, pp.4-5.

181. Ibid.

182. Ibid.

situation was reinforced by Wellesley's despatches from Russian head-quarters. Although Ignatiev "feared that so sudden and easy a victory might lead to plain speaking if not to immediate action on the part of Great Britain" and had urged Wellesley "to impress on H.M.G. the fact that if European complications are to be avoided the moment has arrived for England to induce the Porte to make overtures for peace," Wellesley himself doubted "whether the Emperor will be powerful enough, or have the moral courage to stop a young and victorious army within so short a distance of the prize coveted by every Russian." This was the inescapable danger, for Russia was "essentially a Military Nation and one in which under present circumstances military honour has more weight than considerations of policy and solemn assurances."[183] For all these reasons, the Queen was especially alarmed that "no troops were moving or going," and on 20 July "most earnestly" urged Beaconsfield "to hold very strong language to the Cabinet...and to insist on the speedy despatch of the troops to increase the garrisons, as speedily as possible."[184]

In a dramatic and disarming account of the transactions of the Cabinet of 21 July, Beaconsfield pointed out to the Queen that:[185]

The opposition to the increase of the Mediterranean garrisons, and the procrastination, have entirely arisen from the military authorities, that is to say, the 'Confidential

183. Wellesley to Derby, no.9, most confdl, 23 July 1877, PRO/FO 65/985.

184. Queen Victoria to Beaconsfield, 20 July 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/B/820.

185. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 22 July 1877, ibid, B/XIX/C/285.

Committee' of General Officers, who would be as powerful as the Council of Ten, and outvote always the Doges. It is they who have opposed every military move, that has been suggested from the beginning - Mediterranean garrisons, expeditions to Gallipoli, and so on. What they want, and what they have ever tried to bring about, is a great military expedition, like the Crimean; but such a step would be utterly inconsistent with the policy of neutrality adopted by the Cabinet, and cannot be countenanced unless there is an avowed and public change of that policy.

Yesterday, the Cabinet in a decided manner declared, that they would receive no further protests from the 'Confidential Committee,' and ordered steps to be taken immediately for strengthening the Malta garrison by 3,000 men, and will follow this up, according to circumstances. So great is the influence of the 'Confidential Committee,' that the Secretary of War, who had been in favor of the measure, advised the Cabinet not to adopt it, and ultimately agreed only with a protest.

But in spite of the alleged unanimity, the adoption of such a policy was not without its complications, nor, in the light of the Russo-Turkish military situation, did it go far towards forestalling a Russian occupation of Gallipoli. The following day, Manners tendered his resignation on the grounds that neither of the Cabinet measures could, or were intended to prevent, a Russian occupation of Gallipoli and Constantinople, temporary or otherwise.[186] The Duke of Cambridge drew up a formal protest in which he stated that to a man the Horse Guards Staff were "extremely distressed" at the Mediterranean arrangements (to send 3,000 infantry to Malta without cavalry, artillery, engineers, transport and commissariat), and that the "military authorities" whom he represented "may be considered as merely acting under orders,

186. Manners to Beaconsfield, most confdl, 22 July 1877; secret, 24 July 1877, ibid, B/XX/M/224 and 225.

and in no respect advising the course now contemplated." He pointed out that the reinforcements "will really be of little or no avail, as they are to take no transport, and therefore have not the means of moving and besides if required for any special duty, are not sufficiently numerous to be of any real worth." He "greatly" feared that "their departure may lead to more harm being done, than good, for it will amount to a sort of demonstration without leading to any possible result;" it was virtually "a mere strengthening of the Malta garrison, which so far as I am aware is in no respect threatened from any quarter;" and he hoped "that a more available force may be sent out if it be decided to send troops there at all with an efficient Staff in charge, which would be considered a really moveable body in preference to the very small and unmoveable body...now ordered."[187] Hardy had been "very uneasy" since issuing his orders to the Mobilisation Committee, and the Commander-in-Chief's memorandum "entirely" confirmed his "misgivings" prompting him to write to Beaconsfield urging another Cabinet to reconsider and perhaps reverse their decision. "The more I think of it the less I like it," he wrote, "a body of infantry unprepared for action can do nothing as a demonstration for every military critic will at once detect that in fact they are useless and comment upon their efficiency and we must admit that in fact they are useless for while they are not required for the garrison they are unfit for anything else....On the whole I foresee many enquiries which I shall

187. 'Confidential Memorandum for Secretary of State,' 21 July 1877; Cambridge to Hardy, 21 July 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/268.

be unable satisfactorily to answer for I cannot suggest to myself one good reason for the step which the Cabinet resolved upon...."[188]

A sampling of Foreign Office, Admiralty and Ambassadorial opinion shows how widely War Office pessimism was shared both at home and abroad. Currie frequently warned Layard to "put no trust in any vigorous action on the part of the Government" because Beaconsfield was "much broken in health," because the Cabinet was "apathetic" and would soon "be scattered to the ends of the earth which will be an additional reason for doing nothing," and because Gladstone "would oppose tooth and nail any attempt to get a grant from Parliament for military preparations." He believed the Government would have "backed out" of any Austrain alliance had one been concluded and put to the test, and were not content to go "beyond demonstrations and half-measures."[189] Codrington and Hornby spoke contemptuously of the decision to reinforce Malta with "3000 Infantry without any other equipment than their knapsacks and rifles" as being "very dilatory and unaccountable" and merely "to feel the pulse of the Country and Foreign Press."[190] Layard, Elliot, Lyons and Cowley spoke derisively of the "formidable army" sent to the Mediterranean as arriving too late and likely to excite Russian counter-demonstrations.[191]

188. Hardy to Beaconsfield, confdl, 22 and 23 July 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/143 and 144.

189. Currie to Layard, 5 and 12 July 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

190. Hornby to Layard, 26 July 1877, ibid; Codrington to Hornby, 28 July 1877, 'Letters Received: Admiralty,' Hornby Papers, PHI/118b.

191. Cowley to Layard, 17 July; Lyons to same, 13 and 27 July 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

Indeed the danger that Russia might now be encouraged to seize Gallipoli after by-passing or rapidly crushing Adrianople before advancing to besiege the "Gibralter of the East" had been emphasised in fresh despatches from Constantinople between 25 and 27 July. Fife had reported from Adrianople that because the entrenchments were incomplete and unarmed and because there were "no depots of arms...no proper supplies of food and ammunition for a possible siege," "the place was indefensible, except by a very large force indeed, or in case of only a partial attack."[192] In his despatches, Layard emphasised the significance of this information by pointing out that "the progress hitherto made by the Russians on this side of the Balkans is greater and more serious than the Turkish Government is prepared to admit:"[193]

> They have not only crossed the Balkans in several places and possessed themselves of some important passes but they have descended into Roumelia, have cut off the railway communication between Adrianople and Philibe, and between the former place and Jamboli, have taken possession of strong positions and even threatened an advance upon Adrianople. The attempts made to check them have hitherto failed with loss to the Turkish forces in cannon and men.... Once masters of Adrianople, after a defeat of the Turkish army, the Russians could either advance at once upon Constantinople or upon the Gallipoli Peninsula. Some, whose opinions on military matters are entitled to great weight are of opinion that the occupation of the Peninsula would be their first aim. If the Dardanelles were once in their possession, Constantinople must fall as a consequence. No foreign power could come to its defence or relief, and Russia

192. Fife to Dickson, nos.1,2 and 3, 10 July 1877; Dickson to Layard, confdl, 17 July 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, nos.803 and 804, secret, 18 July 1877, PRO/FO 78/2577; Fife to Dickson, no.6, 24 July 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.879, 1 August 1877, PRO/FO 78/2579; Fife, Armies of Balkans, pp.4-5.

193. Ibid.

would have it in her power to occupy and retain the city.

Because even a temporary occupation of Constantinople by Russia would have calamitous effects "upon the Mussulman populations of India and Central Asia," Layard urged once again a British occupation of Gallipoli. "It must be borne in mind," Layard concluded his despatch of 27 July, "that Russia, once in possession of the Dardanelles all effective action on our part to prevent terms of peace being imposed upon Turkey dangerous to our interests would be paralysed:"[194]

> She might demand anything she liked. If we remonstrated and she refused to listen to our remonstrances it could only be by war that they could be enforced. She might insist upon retaining Constantinople or upon other concessions which might, at last, arouse public opinion in England against her and compel us to go to war. If we resolved to have recourse to this extremity we should have to begin war under the enormous disadvantage of having Russia in possession of the Straits. It appears to me consequently, more prudent and wise to take a step which has the advantage of affording a reasonable hope that it may lead to peace, than by neglecting to do so to increase the risk of being ultimately forced to go to war. I believe, therefore, that the occupation by England of the Gallipoli Peninsula would be in the interest of peace....In fact, the Gallipoli Peninsula is the key to Constantinople. Whoever possesses it must command the city.

This indeed posed a serious question: what in fact could Britain do, short of going to war, to compel the Russians to evacuate Constantinople once they had gained possession of the Dardanelles? In Simmons' opinion, a Russian occupation of Gallipoli (which would necessarily involve the simultaneous seizure and fortification of the Asiatic coast at Chanak) would result in the Black Sea becoming "a Russian lake." "The passes of the Caucasus would then be turned,

194. Layard to Derby, no.849, 27 July 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39128.

and operations resumed in Asia...and a collapse of the Ottoman Empire must ensue." He believed that since "Great Britain alone has never been in a position since the declaration of war to undertake more than the occupation of Gallipoli in addition to rendering the aid of a small contingent for the defence of Constantinople" and that even this limited action was dependent upon exploiting an opportunity that had now passed and would not recur, it "would be beyond the power of Great Britain alone to turn the Russians out and to reopen the Straits for navigation." It would be "exceedingly hazardous" to send an expedition to Gallipoli "which on its arrival might be occupied by the Russians" and to "have to return home ignominiously the laughing stock of the world, and the loss of prestige would be worse almost than a defeat." Moreover, land operations from the Gulf of Scanderoon or the Persian Gulf "although they might prevent or defer the entire conquest of the country, could produce little or no effect on the vital energies of Russia;" and "the only other way" by which Great Britain without alliances could "act by a land force against Russia" was "by developing opposition to her in Central Asia" - but this was a long-term proposition and did not answer the immediately critical situation that was the result of the combined effects of the Russian threat to Gallipoli and the obstructiveness of the Mobilisation Committee. The crux of the matter according to Simmons was not how best to compel the Russians to retire from Constantinople and Gallipoli, but how best to reduce the strategic advantages that would accrue upon such occupations.[195]

195. 'Strictly Confidential Memorandum on Measures to compel a Russian Evacuation of Constantinople,' 26 July 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4.

In a memorandum which was circulated to Hardy, Beaconsfield and the Queen first drawing attention to the imminent reprisal Russian seizure of Gallipoli, Colonel Home had declared:[196]

> The Dardanelles must be kept open. To do so the batteries with the heavy armament must not be allowed to fall into Russian hands. Let the Government decide that when a Russian reaches Malagara or Bulair (preferably the former) to order the fleet into the Dardanelles, land a small force, carry away the breech-pieces of the Krupp guns, and knock off a trunnion from each, thus completely destroying them. Then re-embark and occupy with a small force the Asiatic side at Chanak.

Home believed that since the Russians were unlikely and unable to bring heavy guns and torpedoes to the Gallipoli Peninsula, since "their field guns will not touch the ironclads;" since Chanak was defensible and the batteries at the Bosphorus pointed northward, the Fleet would have free access to the Black and Marmara Seas. He therefore "most strongly" urged "the advisability of at once issuing orders as to the destruction of the batteries on the European side of the Dardanelles when the Russians advance to Malagara or Bulair," and ventured "to submit that some Engineer officers and sappers be at once sent out to the Fleet under Admiral Hornby." Simmons agreed that "the great desideratum" was "the destruction of the batteries, and especially the guns, on the European side" of the Dardanelles:[197]

196. 'Strictly Confidential Memorandum on Chanak,' unsigned and undated, but identified as by Colonel Home, 26 July 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4; Hardy to Beaconsfield, 26 July 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/145, forwarding Home's memorandum.

197. 'Strictly Confidential Memorandum relative to holding the position of Chanak on the Asiatic side of the Dardanelles,' 28 July 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4.

This might possibly be done by H.M.'s fleet alone if they were ready and prepared to take action and seize them by surprise on the first appearance of a force before Bulair, or if it were found that the Turks could not defend the lines covering that position. The distance from Bulair to the batteries is about 30 miles. If the fleet were to blow up the magazines, throw the projectiles into the sea, and were in possession of means...for destroying the guns, and could effect their destruction before they fall into Russian hands, the entry into the Sea of Marmara, and with it free access to Constantinople by ironclad ships might be maintained for a considerable time.

Such action however would only have temporary value and was simply the means of achieving a greater object - the destruction or capture of the Turkish fleet and its naval and military arsenals at Constantinople. For this reason he was inflexibly opposed to Home's proposal to occupy Chanak. Since the possession of Chanak was dependent upon British command of the Sea of Marmara and the security of her Mediterranean communications, any challenge to that command either by Russia's ability rapidly to bring up heavy guns and torpedoes from Odessa and other bases on the Black Sea (Simmons believed Russian field guns could "cause considerable annoyance;" that "medium guns would be capable of seriously injuring timber ships or transports;" and that heavy guns "might even seriously injure ironclads"), by her seizure of the Turkish fleet, commercial steamers and arsenals, or by her turning of the land defences of Chanak, "would lead to far more extensive operations involving naval and military forces of considerable magnitude" while incurring "the most serious risks elsewhere." Simmons' conclusion was "that the occupation of Chanak, the Russians being in full possession of the European side of the Straits, would be a very rash measure, unless Great Britain could ensure the possession or destruction

of the Turkish fleet, or that it would not fall into Russian hands:"

> This would be a grand operation, as it would check the progress of the Russians in Asia, deny to them the communication across the Black Sea for their ships of war and transports, and thus enable the Turks to sustain the war in Asia; in order to effect it, the dockyard, arsenal, and public factories of arms, powder, &c., at and near Constantinople, should be rendered useless by the destruction of all the machinery and stores in them, and all steamers, ships, and boats, of every description, should be cleared out of the various harbours on the European side and taken out of reach, so as to impose every obstacle to the establishment by the Russians of torpedo warfare on the Bosphorus.

Such action would delay Russia becoming an immediate naval threat to Britain's Mediterranean interests; and since "this measure also would be greatly beneficial to Turkey, because it would defer the day when Russia would become a great naval power in the Black Sea," Simmons believed that it was "not altogether unreasonable to suppose that Turkey might be induced to consent to this course by the payment of a sum of money or by an undertaking to return the fleet at the conclusion of the war."

In submitting these proposals on the morning of 28 July after long discussions with Hardy at the House the previous evening, Simmons appended a memorandum by Admiral Yelverton affirming:[198]

> 1. That the operation of destroying the batteries is one which would appear to be capable of being effected by Her Majesty's Fleet.
> 2. That the operation of maintaining the supremacy of Her Majesty's Fleet in the Sea of Marmara for an indefinite period, under the supposition that the Russians had possession of the Turkish Fleet, backed by the resources of the arsenals

198. 'Memorandum by Sir Hastings Yelverton,' 28 July 1877, ibid.

of Constantinople and Nicolaieff, would be one of great difficulty, and would be fraught with danger, whenever the Russians shall have placed any considerable number of medium guns in position on the heights overlooking the Channel.

The operation would require so many ships, including several of the most powerful class, that, combined with the necessity of maintaining a large force for the protection of the communications with England, a very large proportion of Her Majesty's Fleet would be absorbed, and sufficient might not remain for the protection of British interests elsewhere.

3. That the operation of seizing or destroying the Turkish Fleet, if it could be got at, is quite within the compass of Her Majesty's Fleet.

Although it was doubtful whether the Cabinet would resort to the destruction of the Turkish fleet, it was clear that the destruction of the Dardanelles' batteries on the European side held out the only hope of retaining even temporarily any subsequent freedom of action in the matter, and of gaining control of the Black Sea in the event of a breach with Russia. Yelverton had already warned Hornby to "consider this important feature seriously and let me have your views." "The only way I can see to do so," he wrote, "is for you to take the Forts from the Turks at once, and destroy the Guns."[199] Hornby had promptly drawn up a battle-plan for their reduction.[200] Simmons had subsequently cautioned Hardy that although it might take the Russians two to three months to move heavy artillery from Constantinople to the Dardanelles, if the Turks had completed mounting the planned armament of forty armour-piercing guns on both sides and these fell into Russian hands, "the forcing of the passage

199. Yelverton to Hornby, 28 July 1877, 'Letters Received: Admiralty,' Hornby Papers, PHI/118b.

200. 'Memorandum: Dardanelles forts, 1877,' 'Admiralty Minutes and Memoranda,' ibid, PHI/121a.

would be almost impossible. The only way to do it would be to disembark a force and take the batteries from the land side. This operation if opposed would require a considerable force with guns." It was imperative therefore that the European batteries be immediately dismantled; but "the modus operandi would have to be very carefully considered" before any step was taken.[201]

It was this issue that the Cabinet gathered to grapple with on 28 July. Two decisions were made. In the first place, Layard was to be informed that the Cabinet "would be ready on the invitation of the Sultan to send up the Fleet if necessary to avert" a massacre of Christians. "But this cannot be done without proper security for its safe return," wrote Derby,[202] "it is understood that the heavy guns on the European side of the Straits command the passage, and in the present state of things it seems uncertain whether these will not fall into Russian hands. In that case the position of the English fleet might be gravely compromised." Layard was therefore to "ascertain and telegraph without delay what heavy guns there are, and in what spots on the European side of the Dardanelles. Are the batteries now actually manned and by what force? In what way, whether by purchase or otherwise, could we secure their being removed or disabled in case of necessity. They are of little use to the Porte in present circumstances, and in hostile hands they would be a danger to the Turkish fleet also. There is no time to lose. The

201. Simmons to Hardy, 31 July 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4.

202. Derby to Layard, dft, no.384, secret, 28 July 1877; dft, no.385, s.d., PRO/FO 78/2561.

strictest secrecy must be observed." At the same time, the Cabinet sanctioned Home's proposal that Captain Fraser be sent post-haste via Paris, Venice and Trieste to Constantinople, armed with a carpet-bag of gun-cotton, "to accompany our fleet attack on the batteries on the Gallipoli side, and personally to blow up the guns."[203] Fraser left Victoria on 31 July and reported to Layard, Hornby and Dickson in Constantinople on 10 August. But by then all the apprehensions that had resulted in Fraser's mission to Besika Bay and Hornby's preparations to destroy the Gallipoli batteries had been almost ludicrously falsified by second Plevna, in A.J.P.Taylor's words, "one of the few engagements which changed the course of history."[204]

On 20 July, chiefly because Grand Duke Nicholas and Baron Krudener chose to disregard intelligence that Osman Pasha with 40,000 veteran troops was advancing along their flank towards Plevna, Lt.-General Schilder-Schulder "stumbled" upon the Turks at Plevna and in "almost criminal" defiance of the rules of war, without employing a cavalry screen, without "having learned anything about the strength and position of the enemy" and without "any reserve whatever of his own," blindly urged his troops into the assault in company columns, along two lines incapable of mutual support or communication,

203. 'Papers Relative to Captain Fraser's Mission to Besika Bay, August to November 1877,' Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4; Tenterden to Layard, confdl, 2 August 1877, PRO/FO 78/2561; Fraser, Recollections, pp.336-48.

204. A.J.P.Taylor, The Struggle for the Mastery of Europe, London, Oxford, p.245.

against a force which was subsequently discovered to be four times the strength of his own. This unexpected Turkish victory made at first no impression abroad, for all eyes were concentrated on Gourko and the Balkan passes. But Osman's second victory, on 30 July, again largely the result of Shakofskoi's and Krudener's failure to cooperate and of Grand Duke Nicholas's orders, overriding the remonstrances of the local commander, to attack a position "of which he knew nothing," at once transformed the situation by deflecting the main Russian strength to Plevna. Gourko, now unsupported and threatened by Suleiman at Eski-Saara, was compelled to retire northward over the Balkans with considerable loss. The resultant strategical situation was now stalemated in two roughly concentric triangles; the outer consisting of three separate Turkish armies of Widdin, the Danube and the Balkans occupying three points in force under Osman (50,000) at Plevna, Mehemet Ali - a Prussian "accounted one of the best strategists in the Turkish service" - (65,000) at Rasgat, and Suleiman (40,000) at Yeni-Zagra respectively; the inner, following line for line, consisted of three united Russian armies totalling 120,000 infantry, 12,000 cavalry and 648 guns. Instead of immediately defeating the separated and uncoordinated Turkish armies in detail before fresh reinforcements were brought from Asia, as they might well have done with the advantages of superior concentration of force and short interior lines, the Russian high command chose to assume the defensive until sufficient material strength had been gathered to overwhelm the defences of Plevna. Accordingly, the Guards, the Grenadiers and two line divisions (120,000 men and 460 guns) were mobilised, a ukase issued

calling out a portion of the first ban of the Militia (188,000 men) to replace casualties piece-meal, and three Reserve Divisions (36,000 men) mobilised to relieve regular troops from garrison and line of communication duties. At the same time, since these measures were not expected to be productive until October, and the simultaneous clandestine attempts to create insurrectionary diversions in Servia and Greece were discovered to possess even dimmer prospects of success, arrangements were made to bring the carefully nursed Roumanian Army (32,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry and 84 guns) actively into the field on a command basis personally gratifying to Prince Charles but in essence nominal whereby he would command the combined Russo-Roumanian force investing Plevna under the Grand Duke Nicholas as Commander-in-Chief and with a Russian general, Zotof, who had commanded the troops before Prince Charles's arrival, as his Chief of Staff. All these factors - the immediate insufficiency of force, the imperative need for a hasty victory, and the divided command - contained the seeds for the impetuous disaster of third Plevna on 11 and 12 September when over 90,000 Russian troops were decisively repulsed by Osman's inferior force which had unremittingly improvised a formidable fortress of eighteen redoubts supplemented by several lines of trenches. The conflicting divisions of authority between Prince Charles, General Zotof and his assistant Chief of Staff, General Levitsky; Grand Duke Nicholas and his Chief of Staff, General Nepokoitchetsky; the Emperor and his Minister of War, General Milyutin resulted in a so-called battle-plan whose "general idea" was to attack on all sides with uncoordinated columns, "rather than a carefully prepared attack upon the points of

greatest importance - such as the Grivitza or Krishin redoubts - or where the enemy was weakest." The single most important consequence of this battle was the decision to recall Todleben, the hero of Sebastopol, to conduct the siege operations against Plevna; but the three Plevnas - the first an oversight, the second an error, the third a crime, together had already produced deep reactions within the Russian Army, throughout Russia itself and not least among British soldiers and statesmen at home and abroad.[205]

Foreign officers serving at Russian head-quarters were struck by the "almost incredible feeling of despondency" existing among Russian officers, three-quarters of whom "would have voted to return to Russia and to leave the Bulgarians, who were being emancipated entirely against their own wishes, to take care of themselves."[206] Major von Pfeil attributed the breakdown of the Russian military system to Milyutin's "liberalising reforms" which "had contributed greatly to the disintegration" of the officer corps. Wellesley reported that the Russian military party was "far less pretentious" than it had been a few months earlier and that they now realised the seriousness of an invasion of Turkey.[207] From Bucharest, Colonel Mansfield, perhaps the first to perceive the significance of first Plevna, throughout August, September and October, had little to do but "chronicle the continued collapse of the Russian Army," the true extent of which

205. WO Confld Paper 0654, pp.133-208, SSP; Greene, Russian Campaigns, pp.185-201.

206. Pfeil, Experiences, pp.51-2,96.

207. Wellesley to Derby, no.22, most confdl, 29 October 1877, PRO/FO 65/985.

(46,000 lost from disease, wounds or action, 20,000 sick and wounded in hospital tents before Plevna, and troops holding the Shipka Pass in rags) he believed was being deliberately withheld from the Emperor and Russian head-quarters.[208] In any case, all question of a trans-Balkan winter campaign had been abandoned. In a perceptive letter written privately to Derby, Mansfield saw comforting implications for the defence of India.[209] "It is evident," he wrote, "that the Russian army is slow of movement and considerably less efficient than the other armies of Europe:"

> They have made comparatively little progress in the systems initiated in 1866 and 1870: in the present war they will probably not undergo any reverses sufficiently momentous which might serve as wholesome lessons, and they will consequently experience no incidents calculated to arouse them out of that optimism which leads them to believe that they have nothing to learn....In the present war a Sedan is an impossibility; a radical reform will therefore not come into existence. On the contrary there will be the elation of success, whilst optimism will take yet deeper root. In all this it would, of course, be unwise to overlook the necessity of maintaining our forces in India in the highest state of efficiency and numbers compatible with what we are prepared to lay out, but the present test of what Russian armies can perform...I think leaves little doubt, that, for many years to come, we shall not be seriously molested on the North West Frontier of the Punjab.

Undoubtedly the most graphic and influential account of the Russian army was given by Colonel V.Baker in interviews on his return to England with Tenterden and Beaconsfield:[210]

208. Mansfield to Derby, pte, 8 and 15 August; 19 and 28 September; 12 and 19 October 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Colonel Mansfield,' Derby Papers.

209. Same to same, pte, 20 July 1877, ibid.

210. 'Memorandum on Conversation with Baker Pasha,' 30 October 1877, Tenterden Papers, PRO/FO 363/5.

The Russian staff are most incapable, many of them could not ride well, and could only stand around the Grand Duke helplessly. The plan of the campaign is directed from the Emperor's head-quarters. He is surrounded by 120 officers, not one of whom is worth anything and who only serve to confuse each other. The want of administration is the ruin of the army. The Russians do not have daily musters or correct lists of their men. Consequently the Generals never know how many men they are really dealing with....The Russians have moreover lost the organisation of their armies, by mixing the brigades. When reserves are called up, the nearest men are taken whatever regiment they belong to. Consequently nobody knows accurately where any particular regiment is.... General Baker advanced with the attacking columns at Plevna and from a shelter trench saw the Russian infantry advance again and again to attack the earthworks, each time being mowed down by the Turkish fire....The condition of the wounded most deplorable. The Roumanians had no ambulances. The Russian ambulances quite insufficient. The state of the Russian soldiers is one of much suffering from exposure....The sanitary arrangements are disgusting. In fact there are none. The officers show no power of resource and have no 'go' in them. They are listless and helpless in any difficulty. General Gourko is a dashing officer but is not supposed to have any 'head' for strategy. General Scoboleff is a fine fellow and the troops are devoted to him but he too has no military talent. General Todleben has got quite rusty. He has taken no pains to study modern military warfare and clings to the old traditions. His plan is to have railways to connect the different points but this seems hopeless...the country is a swamp of mud....The Russians will have great difficulties as to supplies. Hitherto they have been eating up the country and drawing supplies from Russia being unwilling to pay silver for supplies from Roumania. They have been very wasteful in not laying up stores of hay etc., in Bulgaria and must now depend on Roumania. General Baker believes a winter campaign impossible....

In his despatches and private letters to Derby and Tenterden, Loftus reported the sudden evaporation of all public enthusiasm for the war, the growing and general dissatisfaction with its generalship and mismanagement, and the alarm for Russia's financial condition should it be prolonged

without result.[211] There was agitation and the possibility of a demonstration in Poland - a development which Marx on the basis of "original Russian sources, unofficial and official" judged to be "a new turning point in European history" precipitated by the "thrashing" the Turks had "inflicted not merely to the Russian Army and Russian finances, but to the very persons of the dynasty commanding the army."[212] Jomini's letters to Giers are full of melancholy adversions to Russia's critical ('perdue') military situation at the front and in St.Petersburg.[213] The attacks on Plevna had been a "disorganised hash" made without plan or orders, reminiscent of the conduct of the war of 1828-1829. After twenty years of retrenchment and reform the Russian armies were still inferior to the Turkish in armament, strategy and tactics; the weather, bringing with it typhoid and dysentry, had decidedly turned against the Russians; and Jomini strongly doubted whether the Russian armies in their present forlorn condition, with a Turkish army in the Quadrilateral and a tenuous supply and reinforcement line, could turn a combined Anglo-Turkish force out of Constantinople. What then would be our position, politically, militarily and financially, he asked. There was widespread consternation throughout Russia at the failure of the military party to achieve rapid decisive results.

211. Loftus to Derby, no.446, 14 August 1877, PRO/FO 65/968; pte, 15 and 29 August, 26 September and 24 October 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Loftus,' Derby Papers; Loftus to Tenterden, pte, 12 September 1877, Tenterden Papers, PRO/FO 363/2.

212. K.Marx to F.A.Sorge, 27 September 1877, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Correspondence, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953, pp.374-5.

213. Jelavich, Russia in the East, pp.52-65.

Russia's enemies and detractors abroad had been reassured; and Russia herself had been placed in a "terrible dilemma:" she must choose between a "bastard" and "lame" peace which would allow her "to withdraw with honour if not with profit" or a second campaign which would almost inescapably bring Britain and perhaps Europe into the conflict.

The effect of the three Plevnas upon British military policy was both immediate and profound. In the first place it effectively scotched all ideas of destroying the Dardanelles' batteries and the Turkish fleet. Upon his arrival at Constantinople, Fraser found Hornby, Dickson and Layard under the changed conditions strongly opposed to any offensive action on the part of Britain which might be construed by the suspicious and stimulated Turks as an attempt to seize and retain at their expense "a second Gibralter" in the East and which, in implying the abandonment of Constantinople to a Russian occupation, would almost inevitably drive the Turks into a separate peace injurious to Britain's Asiatic interests.[214] Hornby was particularly skeptical that the Cabinet was betting on the wrong horse in wishing to destroy the Dardanelles' batteries rather than occupy the Bulair lines. "I assume that you think the batteries of the Dardanelles would not prevent this Squadron passing into the Sea of Marmara whenever it pleased," Hornby wrote Derby, "and that in passing it might, with small delay and damage, destroy them. In that opinion I concur, but I doubt if you realise what might follow:"[215]

214. Fraser to Simmons, 15 August 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4.

215. Hornby to Derby, 10 August 1877, bound vol., 'Miscellaneous, 1877,' Derby Papers.

I suppose the Squadron would only be sent up to play a part. If the Northern Shore of the Dardanelles were occupied by an enemy I think it very doubtful if we could play any material part; and if the Bosphorus were also under their command it would be almost impossible. In the latter case we could not even get the Heraclea coal. In the former our English supply of coal, our communications and perhaps our food would in my opinion be stopped....An enemy in possession of the Peninsula would be sure to put guns on commanding points of those cliffs. All the more, if the present batteries, which, are a fleur d'eau, were destroyed. Such guns could not fail to stop transports and colliers and would be most difficult for men of war to silence. We should have to fire at them with considerable elevation, shots which ever a trifle low would lodge harmlessly in the sandstone cliff; those a trifle high would fly in to the country in rear without the slightest effect on the Gunners but amusement.

It is for these reasons that the possession of the Bulair lines by a strong and friendly force seems to everyone here to be imperative if now, or hereafter, you should want to act at Constantinople. The Turks are making progress with them but they are unarmed, not garrisoned and the garrison that would be sent to them in case of a reverse would probably be part of a beaten and indisciplined force. Is it wise to risk our vital interests to such hands.

Nevertheless, as Fraser later personally verified, the defences of the Quadrilateral fortresses, Adrianople and Constantinople were sufficiently advanced to "offer a prolonged resistance to any force unprovided with a heavy siege train" and would "now render the rapid advance of a force on Gallipoli almost impossible unless there be also an enormous investing force" to keep those garrisons "in check."[216]

In a lengthy critique of Simmons' and Home's memoranda

216. Fraser to Simmons, 15 August 1877; 'Memorandum on Bulair lines, 10 August 1877;' 'Report on the Turkish Defences on the Bujuk-Derkos Position, 30 August 1877;' 'General Description of Defences on Adrianople, 30 August 1877;' Simmons to Hardy, 30 August 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/3; Layard to Derby, no.980, 22 August 1877, PRO/FO 78/2580; no.1055, 5 September 1877, PRO/FO 78/2585; Fraser to Colley, 29 October 1877, Fraser, Recollections, pp.444-51, 338-405.

on 14 August,[217] Layard sought a re-examination of British policy centred on the question, are we or are we not prepared to allow Russia to occupy Constantinople. If the Cabinet were, then the means to compel Russia to evacuate the Turkish capital, whether successful or not, would entail enormous sacrifices and risks - if not a general war against Russia alone or Russia and Turkey combined - and "would not avoid one of the dangers to us of the capture of the capital of the Mohammedan world, the effect that it would have throughout Asia and India, and the loss of our prestige." The only rational policy for Britain to adopt was to "give Russia clearly and distinctly to understand that we will not consent, under any circumstances whatever, to the occupation by her of Constantinople, and that she must make peace at Adrianople, if she takes that City." Should Russia fail to comply or exact terms prejudicial to British interests, Great Britain should immediately come to some defensive agreement with Austria and Turkey to prevent the Russian occupation of the Turkish capital:

> Should H.M.G. decide upon adopting some such policy as I have indicated, they have now, in consequence of the recent successes of the Turks, and of the advanced state of the works at Bulair and Bujuk-Checkmedji, time to take measures to enable them to carry it out when the time comes for doing so. The British and Turkish fleets combined, and the troops that we could have ready to land at Gallipoli in case the Turks could not collect a sufficient force to defend the Bulair lines, would probably render it impossible for Russia to seize the Peninsula or to occupy Constantinople, even if Austria abstained from any action. Once the Bulair lines were secured, we should, acting with Turkey, have the Dardanelles

217. Layard to Derby, no.850, secret, 29 July 1877, PRO/FO 78/2577; no.929, secret, 14 August 1877(printed for the Cabinet only), PRO/FO 78/2580.

and the Sea of Marmara at our command, and could assist the Turks in the defence of the lines of Bujuk-Checkmedji. The Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Sea of Marmara and the Straits would be open for the supply of the capital, and the Turkish Government could bring up reinforcements from all parts of the Empire. Under such circumstances, it appears to me almost impossible that Russia could succeed in taking Constantinople. It may be doubted whether she would even attempt it. Moreover, and this appears to me a most important consideration, the population of the capital, Mussulman, Christian and European, would be reassured by the fact that England was acting with Turkey for the defence and protection of the city. The fleet, or a part of it, could be brought up to the Bosphorus with perfect safety. No fear of outbreaks, either from motives of fanaticism or of plunder, need be entertained, and a great calamity, for which history might hold England partly responsible, would be avoided.

But the chances of getting the Cabinet to agree upon a fundamental question of policy over which they had been divided since the opening of the crisis and which had resulted in Fraser's ludicrously belated carpet-bag attempt to blow up the Dardanelles' batteries had been effectually frustrated by the second effect of Plevna - the strengthening of the opposition of the peace party and the suspension of all military preparations, the improvement of the Mediterranean defences, the search for a naval base and the Austrian negociations. Northcote had struck to the core of the problem when he wrote to Corry that "we are always discussing some 'minor premises' without being agreed upon the major, and so are continually arriving at absurd conclusions:"[218]

One man holds that we ought to support Turkey; another that we ought to keep at peace; another that, accepting the defeat of Turkey as certain, we ought to look out for compensation for ourselves. Each of us, when a particular step

218. Northcote to Corry, 15 August 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/N/41.

is proposed, considers how it will agree with his main view, or how it can be made to do so. The proposal is modified accordingly, and modified so often that at last it suits nobody; and then some unmeaning step is decided on; after which it is taken in a manner which was not exactly what anyone expected; and lastly it is explained according to every man's separate theory. How we have got on so far without getting into a worse scrape is a marvel to me....

For this reason Cross, the Home Secretary, felt a particular need to arrive at some definite Cabinet decision regarding action to be taken should the imminent Russian threat to Constantinople recur while the Cabinet was dispersed during recess and before they could be convened.[219] Although Derby "did not see the use of calling together 12 foreign secretaries none of whom including himself knew their business,"[220] a Cabinet was mustered on 14 August. Beaconsfield outlined his tentative policy: Great Britain should not allow Russia to occupy Constantinople nor tolerate a second campaign ("a war of extermination") without active intervention. Sea-power and the insurrectionary style of warfare outlined in the Merv despatch allowed Great Britain to dispense with the need for allies other than Turkey to carry the ensuing war via Batoum and Armenia to Tiflis and from India into Russian Central Asia. There would be no intention of wasting large armies in the re-conquest of Bulgaria. The situation, he later wrote Derby, was "much the same as when Wellington went to the Peninsula, except that a Turk as a soldier is worth 20 Spaniards." But while these suggestions met with general they by no means met with

219. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 'Note on the Cabinet of 15 August 1877,' ibid, B/XIX/C/303.

220. Private diary, 9 August 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

universal approval - Carnarvon making an unconditional and Salisbury and Derby qualified remonstrances - and the question remained unresolved.[221]

Over the next six weeks it appeared to Hardy and Beaconsfield that, in view of the continued Turkish resistance, the inconclusive nature of the defensive battles and the uncertain outcome of the campaign as a whole, it would be premature to arrive at fixed policy decisions concerning the security of Constantinople and war with Russia. But fresh pressures towards this end were now encountered from the Queen who, having read Layard's critique of Simmons' and Home's memoranda with great satisfaction and full approval, became "very vehement" "eager and earnest" over "the necessity for a decided policy and an agreement about it in the Cabinet - rapidity instead of delay." Both in conversation and writing she repeated to Hardy, the Minister Resident at Court, "her strong opinion against a second campaign - the occupation of Constantinople and delay in deciding what we would do," and urged him to write to Beaconsfield drawing "his very serious attention" to Layard's despatch and to the necessity of acting upon "the very sound advice it contains." "We ought not to lose time," she wrote, "and trust to Russian defeats."[222] Lord Derby (whom she doubted even read let

221. Beaconsfield to Layard, secret, 6 August 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39136; same to Derby, 1 September 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Beaconsfield,' Derby Papers.

222. Queen Victoria to Hardy, 30 August 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/265; private diary, 31 August, 3 and 10 September 1877, ibid, T501/11; Hardy to Beaconsfield, confdl, 30 August 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/146; Hardy to Cairns, pte, 3 and 6 September 1877, Cairns Correspondence, vol.7, pp.1378 and 1382; Hardy to Northcote, 19 September 1877, Iddesleigh Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50022; same to Cross, 10 September 1877, Cross Papers, BM.Add.MSS.51267.

alone answered Layard's despatches) and the Government would be held responsible for this new practice of disregarding "the constant warnings of our Ambassadors." "The Russians must not go to Constantinople." Beaconsfield's reaction to this pressure was delayed and unenthusiastic. Not until 24 September, well after third Plevna, did he fully address himself to the Queen and the calling of the fresh Cabinet. "When the hubbub of all these battles is ceased, and the general situation a little more precise," he wrote, "it would be desirable to call the Cabinet together and make to them the distinct proposition above mentioned. Then, give them a certain time to consider it, and then decide. The system of having a great many Cabinets till its members have agreed on some policy, is a bad one. Every day there are fresh difficulties. A mind like the Chancellor of the Exchequer's, for example, would make a fresh difficulty every day. Lord B. has invited Mr. Secretary Hardy to Hughenden, and proposes to go with him into all the military questions with minute detail, so as to be quite prepared for the Cabinet."[223]

The result of this meeting was Beaconsfield's adoption of Hardy's proposal that, in order to prevent "a second campaign which would have for its object the capture and retention of Constantinople" and in view "of the necessity that we should resolve on some line of action to stop, if possible, the continuance or renewel of bloodshed, and at all events to maintain our own interest as regards the possession of Constantinople," the Porte should be sounded

223. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, most confdl, 24 September 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/317.

as to whether it would agree to Great Britain acting as mediator between Turkey and Russia; that if its proposed peace terms seemed reasonable (i.e. the settlement of Bulgaria on the basis of the London Protocol and the restoration to Russia of that portion of Bessarabia ceded by the Treaty of Paris) and sufficiently satisfactory to vindicate Russian honour, Great Britain should present them to Russia accompanied by the intimation that if they were rejected and Constantinople were threatened in a second campaign, Great Britain "would be prepared to give aid to Turkey in the defence of the Capital."[224] This, in Beaconsfield's opinion, was a "clear and precise policy" which would get "us out of all the embarrassing distinctions between temporary and permanent occupation" which had never been recognised by the public, but which had "harassed and nearly humiliated" the Cabinet in the last session. It would show Europe that we were earnest in our intentions "to preserve Constantinople intact" and would throw upon Russia (who was being urged by Bismarck that "the days of action by fleets are over - that we have no soldiers and are not making preparations to have any" and that the blockaded Russian commerce in the Baltic and the Black Seas could be carried on German railways) the ultimate responsibility for widening the conflict.[225] Hardy

224. Same to same, confdl, 28 and 29 September 1877, ibid, B/XIX/C/322 and 323; Note by Hardy, 29 September 1877, ibid, B/XIX/B/903 and 903a; private diary, 29 September 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

225. Beaconsfield to Derby, 28 September 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Beaconsfield,' Derby Papers; same to Salisbury, 3 October 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Disraeli,' Salisbury Papers; same to Queen Victoria, secret, 6 October 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/329.

believed the Cabinet would unanimously adopt such a policy,[226] and Beaconsfield even suggested to Derby that the Foreign Secretary himself should propose it to the Cabinet as his own.[227] A Cabinet was therefore fixed for 5 October; but the immediate response meanwhile was such that Beaconsfield was led to expect "considerable opposition" and "much difference of opinion."[228] Cairns for instance was convinced that "a policy of inactivity would be fatal to our own interests and to the peace of Europe" and trusted that "we shall never again be driven, as we were last summer to deliberate on what our interests required to be done at Constantinople and the Dardanelles, with the consciousness that, whatever might be required, it was too late to do it." It would be "too miserable if this war is renewed for another year" and he was "quite for taking up some step, such as you suggest, to prevent it."[229] Northcote, on the other hand, wished the Cabinet to take "a broad view of the questions involved" and not to treat them from "a position resembling selfish isolation." Even if the Russian armies occupied Constantinople, they would be in no position to turn it against British interests for some time; the question of interference was therefore not so urgent as Beaconsfield supposed. Moreover it would be unwise to neglect the feeling

226. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 29 September 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/329.

227. Same to Derby, 28 September 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Beaconsfield,' Derby Papers.

228. Same to Queen Victoria, secret, 3 October 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/325.

229. Cairns to Beaconsfield, confdl, 1 October 1877, ibid, B/XX/Ca/220.

of Germany which might be prepared to condone a temporary occupation of Constantinople if that would bring the war to an end.[230] Finally, Derby was "not prepared to support the proposal...still less to put it forward," although "a preliminary discussion" would be "of use as showing how far, and on what points, there is likely to be agreement among us as to the course which we ought to take."[231]

The Cabinet on 5 October naturally fell into these divisions. While Hardy, Manners, Richmond, Beach and Cairns supported the proposal, objections were raised by Salisbury, Cross, Smith and Northcote as to its prematurity and to its commitment to a specific solution that may well need to be revised with the course of the war. While Beaconsfield admitted that "it was impossible to take any active step in the prosecution of the proposal while the campaign was not concluded, as a simple military event might disturb all the calculations on either side," he believed "even a hypothetical discussion on the subject was preferable to prolonged silence and inertness." Although the Cabinet as a whole seemed reluctant to associate the question of mediation so inflexibly with that of war in defence of Constantinople, it was finally agreed that on completion of the present campaign an attempt should be made to extract from Russia a promise (secret if necessary and in return for Britain's good offices "to bring about a fair and honourable peace with Turkey") that "she would not advance upon or occupy

230. Northcote to Beaconsfield, confdl, 1 October 1877, ibid, B/XX/N/42.

231. Derby to Beaconsfield, 29 September 1877, ibid, B/XX/S/1261.

Constantinople, even temporarily" and that "if this assurance should be refused, we should hold ourselves free to take steps to intervene for the protection of the Turkish Capital, and we should then prepare ourselves to take these steps."[232]

Thus British policy was seen to be wholly dependent upon the course of the war in Turkey - whether or not it might be prolonged into a second campaign; and by mid-October there could be no doubt in which direction it was moving. On 15 October, after three months' reckless inactivity, Mukhtar Pasha suffered a crushing defeat at Aladja Dagh, the remnants of his army "broken down and utterly demoralised" streaming towards Kars and Erzeroum: on 16 November, Kars, the great eastern stronghold of the Ottomans fell for the third time in fifty years in open assault. These defeats which foreboded a Russian occupation of Armenia and Batoum provoked from Kemball, Dickson and especially Layard, who was already engaged in a prolific correspondence with Lytton and was in receipt of all his most important secret despatches and demi-official letters, a series of alarmist despatches emphasising their disastrous effects "upon the Mohammedan populations of Central Asia and India," the facilities they "would afford to Russia for further conquests in Persia and Asia Minor," and their consequences "to our direct communication with India." Batoum was the only port on the south-eastern shores of the Black Sea capable of becoming "a great military, naval and trading station:" it connected Odessa, Nicolaieff, Sebastopol and "the centre of Russia" to Georgia,

232. 'Memorandum on the Meeting of the Cabinet on Friday 5 October - submitted to the Queen by Lord Cairns,' Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, secret, 6 October 1877, ibid, B/XIX/C/327 and 329.

Persia and western Asia and made "an advance upon India... unquestionably possible and feasible."[233] They caused the Queen to urge Beaconsfield to apply "the shibboleth of no second campaign" to strategic points in Armenia.[234] But although Beaconsfield lent evasive encouragement to Musurus, the Turkish Ambassador, and made special enquiries of Layard, Salisbury and Hardy about Batoum and the Persian Gulf should Armenia be overrun, he was careful to point out to the Queen that the circular of 6 May had not defined any casus belli in Armenia "because had we done so, in addition to those we had defined, we should have been bound to go to war with Russia at once, for in truth, the whole of the Ottoman Empire is a British Interest," that because weather and terrain would prevent the Armenian campaign being force to its conclusion, the capture of Kars was really "a barren triumph" and had not altered the Turks' determination to fight on in Europe where Plevna was "our only chance."[235]

But in Europe, the Turkish system of war administration whereby the operations of three independent and equal, but rival and intriguing field commanders - Osman, Suleiman and

233. Layard to Derby, no.1282, 31 October; no.1284, 1 November; no.1313, 7 November 1877, PRO/FO 78/2590 forwarding despatches by Kemball and Dickson; same to same, no.1444, secret, 4 December 1877, PRO/FO 78/2593; 5 December 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Layard,' Derby Papers.

234. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 5 November 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/345.

235. Ibid; B/XIX/C/345,350 and 356; Beaconsfield to Layard, most secret, 22 November 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS. 39136; same to Salisbury, pte, 26 November 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Disraeli,' Salisbury Papers; Layard to Beaconsfield, secret, 12 December 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/L/132.

Mehemet - were controlled by telegraph from Constantinople by a War Council, itself "riven by dissensions," deliberating in continuous session defied that fundamental axiom of successful war prosecution - central and unified direction - and by creating the "danger of desultory operations being undertaken from personal considerations without any sufficiently important ulterior objective" in view, resulted in a series of uncoordinated and therefore ineffectual offensives which, already much straitened by topographical conditions, poor supply lines, lack of transport and poor internal administration, not only failed to divert a single Russian from Plevna or Shipka but accumulated more casualties than the enemy - an enemy that was already more numerous and was now in steady process of reinforcement.[236] In Greene's opinion it was "as bad a system as could possibly be conceived"[237] especially when, as Fraser observed, "there was nothing to lead one to think they have a von Moltke at Constantinople."[238] Most disappointing of all, but symptomatic of the dry-rot of the Turkish command structure, was Mehemet Ali's failure to concentrate and fight a decisive battle about Beila after driving the Russians back from the Lom to the Jantra. According to the War Office in London, Mehemet was a man possessed of "much energy, great acumen, sound judgement and a brain fertile in ideas,"[239] but he appeared to Chermside, the

236. Greene, Russian Campaigns, pp.202-298; WO Confdl Paper 0654, pp.184-9, SSP.

237. Greene, ibid, p.205.

238. Fraser to Simmons, 20 August 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4.

239. WO Confdl Paper 0654, pp.184-5, SSP.

British military attache serving at his head-quarters, "not so much as a Commander-in-Chief as a General of Brigade, full of bonhommie and anxious to gain and retain by all means in his power the good will of his subordinates and men. He is further much occupied with diplomatic schemes, and rather I imagine fancies he can make use of all he is brought in contact with to influence them to his own ends, his efforts to secure such influence being I think transparent."[240] Moreover, he lacked the "practical aid of a good staff" to give shape to his ideas, but more importantly, lacked the resolution to issue sufficiently precise instructions to and to gain the confidence of his generals, most of whom were incompetent to conduct offensive operations and were not backward or overscrupulous in using this latitude of independence to their own advantage, often subordinating the general plan of campaign to their own ambitions.

Eventual defeat, moreover, was inherent in the very nature of the war the Turks were perforce conducting. In a lengthy memorandum on the "Actual Position of the War" circulated to the Cabinet and the Queen on 27 October,[241] Simmons simply confirmed what Archibald Forbes had predicted in mid-August:[242]

They can play the waiting game better than the Russians, who will of course attack as soon as they receive reinforcements, disputing every foot of ground and covering every square yard with trenches, to prolong the war into another campaign, if

240. Chermside to Dickson, 21 August 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.1018, 29 August 1877, PRO/FO 78/2584.

241. 'Memorandum by General Sir Lintorn Simmons on The Actual Position of the War so far as can be judged from the information at his disposal, on the 27th October 1877,' Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4.

242. Daily News War Correspondence, pp.353-72.

not to surround the Russians with a circle of iron which they may vainly endeavour to break. This defensive war of positions is undoubtedly the best they could have adopted. The want of military knowledge among the Turks, the utter lack of good officers, of discipline, of military skill, and the consequent impossibility of handling troops in the field, of executing manoevres, or even tactical evolutions, makes it impossible for the Turks, even with triple numbers, to contend with the Russians in the open field....

Nevertheless, this plan, the best that could possibly have been adopted by the Turks, although it may retard the end cannot avert it. In the first place no army, that is compelled to act purely on the defensive, tactically as well as strategically, can ever be victorious in the end. It is destined to be finally beaten by laws as inevitable and inexorable as that of gravitation. It is merely a question of time, numbers and mathematics....

By 23 October, with the arrival of the Imperial Guard and Gourko's victory at Gorni-Dubnik (which prevented Mehemet Ali's attempt to raise the siege), Todleben's investment of Plevna with a Russo-Roumanian force of 160,000 troops was completed; and, as Baker, Dickson and Fraser had foretold, the fall of Plevna was now only a matter of time, provisions and weather. Moreover, by successfully resisting the demands of Gourko and Scoboleff, especially after the capture of Kars on 16 November, prematurely to assault Plevna, and by adopting scientific siege methods, Todleben's command had exercised an immense and "most remarkable" stimulative and recuperative effect upon the Russian armies.[243] On 10 December, after it had been ascertained from deserters that Plevna was on the point of exhaustion, and after several appeals for Osman's surrender had been met with abortive sorties, Plevna was stormed and immediately capitulated.

243. Pfeil, Experiences, pp.330-62; Wellesley to Derby, no.27, secret, 14 November 1877, PRO/FO 65/985.

The stalemate was broken; the keystone of the Turkish defence which "had arrested the Russian advance and completely paralysed their whole plan of campaign and all their movements for five months; which caused them to call forth vast reinforcements from Russia, and, pending their arrival, to supplicate the aid of a petty principality; which killed and wounded and spread disease among nearly 40,000 of his enemies, and caused the affairs of a mighty empire to be directed during half a year from miserable huts in obscure villages in a foreign land" had fallen.[244] Just as the defeats before Plevna and Kars had with surprising suddenness brought unimagined relief into the war-crisis, so now their capture, although not altogether unexpected or unprepared for, ushered in with equally dramatic rapidity its final denouement. Within three months, Russian armies were camped beneath the walls of Constantinople, triggering off a chain-like reaction in British military policy which within a year saw preparations for war on a global scale, an invasion of Afghanistan, the Anglo-Turkish convention, the Berlin Congress, the Treaty of Gandamak and a rapprochement with Persia.

244. Greene, Russian Campaigns, p.314.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MERV CRISIS,

APRIL 1877 - AUGUST 1877.

It was against this background of indecisiveness, imeptness and untimeliness in the making of Britain's Near Eastern military policy outlined in the previous chapter that Lytton, with all the central executive power of a military government, hoped to take positive, vigorous and timely measures for the direct defence of India. On 24 April, immediately after the declaration of war, the Russian Army of the Caucasus crossed the Armenian frontier in three principal directions; towards Batoum, towards Kars and towards Bayazid. A considerable body of reputable and informed military opinion had long maintained that this situation might well be the prelude, if not to the actual or immediate invasion of India, then at least to a prepond-erance of Russian influence in the East and a corrosive moral supremacy that the British Raj could ill-afford to tolerate or endure. Home, Wolseley and Wellesley were agreed before the war that Russia's main operations would take place in Asia Minor and, in a sense, until the surprising reverses which began to eventuate after 30 June - coinciding with the Russian crossing of the Danube - these operations, which up to that time were the only active operations of the war, were regarded in London - absorbed as it was in Cabinet difficulties, Austrian negociations and the imminent Russian threat to Constantinople and the Dardanelles, and because of Salisbury's secretive methods in handling Indian problems which were criticised in Parliament and left the Cabinet largely unaware of the seriousness of the threat to India posed by Russian successes in Armenia - as a sort of distant twilight war the monstrous distortions of whose effects could only be attributed to the exhuberantly fertile and perfervid

imaginations of those arch-Imperialist pro-consuls, Layard and Lytton.

But from the peculiarly clear angle of vision of Simla, the situation appeared otherwise. The sudden decisiveness of the first Russian victories and the potentially rapid collapse of Turkish military power in Armenia reported by Kemball and Layard, the wavering neutrality and patent helplessness of Persia, Lomakin's expedition against the Turkomans towards Kizil Arvat, Captain Napier's discovery of fresh routes to Merv, and growing evidence of Russian intrigue at Cabul compelled the Indian Government to seek temporary measures of local defence that, without embroiling them in an Afghan war, would gain time while the frontier was strengthened and the Indian armies mobilised. Nevertheless, the Indian Government was to find that its military policy conceived under these peculiarly Indian conditions came to be judged in the light of those fresh European complications outlined in the previous chapter and in terms of a threat that by 3 July was no longer deemed to exist.

As early as 1870 both Simmons and Hozier had drawn attention to the dangers implicit in a Russian occupation of Armenia, suggesting that it would "require at least a European coalition" to prevent her from further extending "her Southern frontier unless in the meantime some material guarantee be taken to prevent that extension."[1] In their earliest study of the "Russian advances in Central Asia" in 1873, the Intelligence Branch had noted that because of

1. 'Secret Memorandum on War with Russia,' Capt. J.W.Hozier, October 1870, PRO/WO 32/120; 'Memorandum by Simmons to Cardwell etc...,' 15 December 1870, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

Russia's Caucasian resources and communications it was not inconceivable that in the event of complications with England "Russia may attempt to carry out one of the projects for the invasion of India submitted to the Emperor in 1855-6."[2] In India, Napier, Roberts, MacGregor and more recently Colley and Lytton fully subscribed to these views although, as will be seen later, they disagreed as to the means of checking the Russian advance. In Constantinople, two days after the Russian crossing of the frontier, on 26 April, in a memorandum[3] "with reference to the means of defence against Russia possessed by Turkey on her Asiatic frontier and to the results to be anticipated from the success of the Russian arms in that part of the Turkish Empire," Sir Arthur Kemball had warned that "the mastery obtained by Russia over Turkish soil in Asia Minor...would soon extend up to the very shores of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and of the Persian Gulf." "It must not be forgotten," wrote Layard in a 'most confidential' despatch a month later when the collapse of Turkish military power in Asia seemed a foregone conclusion, "that the possession of Armenia by Russia as regards any designs she may have upon India...would be very different from that of any part of Turkestan or Central Asia. In Armenia and the North of Persia she would have a hardy and abundant population, affording her excellent materials for a large army, ready at any time to advance upon our Indian frontier, and resting upon a convenient and sure base of

2. WO Confdl Paper 0547, SSP.

3. 'Memorandum by Sir Arthur Kemball,' 26 April 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.347, confdl, 26 April 1877, PRO/FO 78/2570.

operations, in direct communication, by the Caspian Sea, and by Batoum, with the heart of the Russian Empire. The moral effect of the conquest of Armenia...by Russia upon our Mahommedan subjects, and upon the populations of Central Asia, cannot be overlooked by a statesman who attaches any value to the retention of India as part of the British Empire."[4]

The views of so wide and distinguished a body of opinion could not be lightly disregarded as wrong-headed or necessarily alarmist. Nevertheless, there could be no doubt that the ultimate degree of Russia's success and therefore the nature and extent of British intervention, independent of European, Cabinet or domestic complications, was conditioned by certain strategic considerations - the relative strengths, composition and leadership of the opposing forces, potential partisan risings in the Caucasus, the attitude of Persia, and the possibility of a jehad or the instigation of tribal insurrection in Central Asia - which require further examination.

The physical and strategic disposition of the Turkish forces was not promising. In terms of strength alone, the Russian order of battle appeared to disclose an army of operations of six divisions, or 180,000 men, supported by 400 guns.[5] Of this force almost 40,000 were irregular or Cossack cavalry, born frontiersmen who, by livelihood,

4. Layard to Derby, no.546, most confdl, 30 May 1877, PRO/FO 78/2571.

5. WO Confdl Paper 0653, 'The Russo-Turkish War, 1877: Operations in Asia: the Army of the Caucasus,' p.11, SSP. The actual Russian order of battle had not been published and it was necessary to base all speculations upon Consul Rickett's report on the 'Supposed Number and Position of Russian Forces,' 27 March 1877.

temperament and instinctive tactical sense, were ideally fitted to sweep deeply in sotnia's to the outskirts of Turkish territory, towards the Mediterranean and the Persian and Arabian Gulfs. The Army of the Caucasus was commanded by General Loris Melikoff, "an active, able, and dashing officer" of Armenian extraction, whose appointment suggested the possibility of an annexationist policy. The general intentions of the Russian high command seemed clear: "to pour troops by land into the theatre of war faster than... Turkey could do by sea, and to crush her enemies by force of superior numbers."[6]

In contradistinction, the Turkish forces were described in a confidential War Office memorandum entitled "the Armed Strength of Turkey and the Dispositions for Defence"[7] as "little better than an armed rabble" of no more than 80,000 men consisting largely of old and insubordinate recruits without "a uniform system of tactical bodies" such as definite divisions or brigades "or organised in such a manner as to fit them for combined action on a large scale in the field." Their meagre cavalry force consisted of twenty squadrons of Circassian and Kurdish levies which, in Kemball's opinion, "are not easily held together and under stress of any kind may hardly be depended on for operations of regular warfare." It was rumoured, moreover, that the Turkish commander was more likely to be influenced by Russian roubles than by

6. Wellesley to Derby, no.8, confdl, 7 February; no.24, secret, 23 April 1877, PRO/FO 65/966; Loftus to Derby, no.195, 24 April 1877, ibid; WO Confdl Paper 0636, pp.57-72, SSP.

7. WO Confdl Paper, n.n., 'The Armed Strength of Turkey and the Dispositions for Defence,' n.d., but probably 8 May 1877, SSP.

Russian shot, and was anyway subject to rigorous control from the divans of Constantinople.[8] In these circumstances, the only logical policy for the Turks to adopt was one of a protracted delaying guerilla defence, making such use of the terrain and the partially-repaired forts as seemed possible or appropriate until other extraneous factors, such as allies or weather, came to their assistance.

From the Indian standpoint, three possible lines of intervention could be clearly contemplated taking place separately or in combination. In the first place, an Indian expeditionary force might be landed in the Persian Gulf. This in turn might be presented with three likely objectives whose lines of operation were largely determined by the courses of the Tigris and the Euphrates. It was held by some authorities, for instance, that it was both possible and strategically feasible to send this force along the Tigris from Basra to Bagdad, turning eastward into Persia across the Zagros mountains to sever the Russian line of communication with Tehran at Tabriz, and subsequently to march via Erivan upon Tiflis and the lower Caucasian regions. Since this project is most intimately linked with the question of the invasion of India, it will be dealt with more fully later in discussing the attitude of Persia. Furthermore, in his memorandum on "Armenia as a Theatre of War" the previous December, MacGregor had suggested that a force of 60,000 British-Indian troops might, after concentrating at Bagdad, march the entire length of the Tigris, via Mosul, to Bitlis

8. 'Memorandum by Sir Arthur Kemball,' 26 April 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.347, confdl, 26 April 1877, PRO/FO 78/2570; WO Confdl Paper, 'Armed Strength of Turkey etc...,' p.12, SSP.

to support operations around Erzeroum or Bayazid: but this proposal neglected to consider sufficiently "the vast amount of costly preparation" - commissariat, engineering, transport and intelligence - that would be entailed in moving and feeding such a large force through pestiferous and barren regions and ensuring its arrival in a fit condition to fight, or to note that in 1836 General Chesney had been unable to penetrate more than fifty miles beyond Bagdad because the river was "shoaly and the channel irregular." It was roundly condemned in England by Home and Baring as an operation that "could not for a moment be entertained;" and in India by Roberts as "an extremely difficult one for the advance of our army, and would only be adopted under exceptionable circumstances." There remained the Euphrates Valley route, which Home had ruled useless for operations in Azerbyn, Persia and Kurdistan, but which, in theory at least, was strategically well situated for operations in support of Erzeroum and Diabekir. But on Rawlinson's authority, it was not passable by either land or water, being without sufficient supplies or wood, and exposed to violent squalls, pestilence and Bedouin raiders.[9]

Most British and Indian military authorities agreed with Roberts that "the way in which a force from India could best assist operations in Armenia would depend on a variety of circumstances...but that the most convenient plan would

9. 'Memorandum by Lt.-Colonel C.M.MacGregor on Armenia as a Theatre of War,' 15 December 1876; Roberts to Johnson, 11 March 1877, loose papers, Roberts Papers; 'Report on the possibility of sending an Expedition from the Persian Gulf up the Valleys of the Euphrates or Tigris,' Capt. E.Baring, n.d., Cromer Papers, PRO/30/6/16; WO Confdl Paper 0636, pp.106-117, SSP.

be to send it by sea through the Suez Canal, and land it either at Alexandretta or on the Southern shore of the Black Sea." Precisely where an army might be disembarked in the Bay of Scanderoon - at Suadia or Alexandretta - had been a question of some debate, and even the Euphrates Valley Railway Parliamentary Committee of 1871-2 had been unable to arrive at a decision. But, as Baring had noted, whichever base was selected, although there were minor inland difficulties, this line of action avoided "the unhealthy deltaic swamps of Bussorah," shortened the operation by months, and brought the troops fresh and fit directly to the most crucial scene of action. During May and June, MacGregor continued to give this course of action lengthy and serious consideration,[10] but, as will be seen later, Lytton, Colley and Roberts, increasingly preoccupied with the implications of Russian successes in Armenia and of Russian expeditions against the Turkomans, felt that it could be as well launched from England and rejected it in favour of operations that were more directly based upon India.

Undoubtedly the most immediately influential course of action that Britain could adopt was to operate from the south-eastern shore of the Black Sea, either from Tripolis or Trezibond in the direct defence of Erzeroum, or from Batoum, Poti or elsewhere to foment rebellion in the Russian Caucasian rear. In his memorandum for Cardwell in December

10. 'Memorandum on the Aid which can be rendered Turkey from India,' n.d.; MacGregor, 'Memorandum on Armenia as a Theatre of War,' 15 December 1877; Roberts to Johnson, 11 March 1877, loose papers, Roberts Papers; 'Report etc...,' Capt. E.Baring, n.d., Cromer Papers, PRO/30/6/16; WO Confdl Paper 0636, p.107, SSP; 'Memorandum by Simmons to Cardwell,' 15 December 1870, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

1870, Simmons had "unhesitatingly" pointed out that whereas Russia was "invulnerable on any vital point" in the Baltic, the Black Sea or North Pacific, there was, however, "one point which although not vital, is of immense importance to Russia as affecting her prestige in Central Asia and consequently one in which it would be to the especial advantage of Britain to attack her. That point is in her Caucasian possessions...." This view was widely supported; it was recommended by MacDougall, Baring, MacGregor and Kemball as most suited to the present Turkish plight; and during a later crisis when war with Russia once again seemed imminent, the same conclusion was drawn from a study of "England's means of Offence against Russia."[11] Nevertheless, in Simmons' opinion, "this plan of attack" could only succeed if certain conditions were fulfilled; firstly, "security of communication with and on the Black Sea - as the operation would be entirely dependent on the sea for its supplies of every description;" secondly, "security of Turkey in Europe against invasion from across the Danube;" and thirdly, "a well-organised Turkish force in the elevated region in front of Erzeroum." In the present circumstances, however, none of these conditions could be guaranteed with any hope of certainty. The maritime preponderance implied in the first could only be assured if other powers did not intervene, and the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles remained secure as implied

11. Ibid; P.L.MacDougall, "The Khedive's Egypt and our Route to India," Blackwoods, CXXII, October 1877, pp.477-90; WO Secret Memorandum: 'England's means of Offence against Russia,' 7 July 1884; WO Secret Memorandum: 'Military Operations in the event of war with Russia,' 18 April 1885; WO Confdl Memorandum: 'What are Russia's vulnerable Points,' F.S.Roberts, 22 May 1885, loose papers, Roberts Papers; see also loose papers, Lyall Papers.

in the second. It would also appear that Simmons envisaged the bulk of the Turkish army drawn from Europe acting as a massive anvil against which the insurrectionary tribes would throw and crush the detachments of the Russian army as they debouched through the Caucasian defiles. But although MacGregor and Kemball, as well as Simmons and Baker, had suggested the formation of large irregular Turkish contingents paid and officered by Englishmen, it was clear that the present divided and disorganised condition of the Turkish army precluded its immediate usefulness for such a purpose and on such a scale.

Nevertheless, the Caucasus was recognised as an inherent source of rebellion even if it could not be focussed and controlled. "The possible outbreak," ran an Intelligence Branch appreciation,[12] "of the Mahommedan and other tribes inhabiting the Caucasus has always been, and must be for some considerable time to come, a source of solicitude to the Russian Government and a weighty factor for consideration in forming its plans, particularly in the case of a war waged against the chief Mahommedan power." There was sufficient evidence to suggest that disturbances were "extremely likely to take place." Consul Rickett's had reported in November "that the Mahommedans in the Erivan district had sent a letter to the Sultan offering assistance in the event of war," and that "the people of Daghestan...were ready to assist" if the Turks showed signs of success. By December, the Kurds and Abkhazes had already begun to plunder. But the continued success and effectiveness of this inchoate movement, and its development into a wieldable weapon of major

12. WO Confdl Paper 0653, p.2, SSP.

strategic importance, unless "backed by the landing of an organised force, followed up by a movement to Tiflis and an occupation of the capital" was a matter of some doubt. It was admitted that "the various tribes and nationalities inhabiting the Caucasus differ so materially in their religion, speech, etc., as to render any chance of a joint action for their common emancipation hopeless under the present conditions." The enclosed nature of the country facilitated Russian attempts to localise rebellion; and by playing off tribe against tribe, they had already proved successful in neutralising "the possible action of the Mahommedans." Moreover, there was no local leader of sufficient stature, such as the legendary Schamyl, around whom a viable movement could coalesce. Nevertheless, it could be seen that the mere stimulation of these revolts, unconnected as they were, in tying down inconveniently large Russian detachments, might materially affect the outcome of any Anglo-Russian conflict in Asia, and particularly of a Russian invasion of India through Persia.[13]

Strategically, Persia constituted the central link in the chain of buffers that stretched from Turkey to Afghanistan separating the Russian and Indian Empires. As a predominant Russian influence at Constantinople could be construed as a direct challenge to Britain's sea communications with India, so it could be (and indeed was) argued that a similar preponderating influence in Persia posed a direct threat to Herat and ipso facto to the North-West Frontier of India. The present undeclared attitude of the Persian Government towards the Russo-Turkish war, therefore,

13. Ibid, pp.2 and 38.

was a matter of some concern, and could only be assumed to be "favourable than otherwise to Russia." At any rate, declared an Intelligence Branch memorandum shortly before the outbreak of war:[14]

> It seems nearly certain that arms have been sent from the Russian to the Persian Government, that Russian staff and other officers have been visiting the Persian detachments in Aderbijan, that Persia has assembled a considerable force on her north-west frontier at Tabriz and Khoi, and other troops at Kirmanshah on the line of operations to Bagdad. At Shiraz, Hamadam, and other places, concentrations of troops are being actively proceeded with.
>
> The Persian army is so worthless and feeble that it is hardly to be supposed that Russia intends employing these troops in joint military operations, but it is more probable that she contemplates deriving advantages from the circumstance that the threatening bearing of these troops will cause the Turks to make a strong detachment in order to watch Persian movements.
>
> The operations of the Persians will, in all probability, therefore be limited to minor actions and raids into Turkish territory. The Turks have little to fear from these, for doubtless the news must have spread in the bazaars that not long ago 20,000 Persian troops of Khorassan were taken prisoners by a band of Turcoman nomads, some 2,000 in number.

The substance of these remarks was shortly afterwards confirmed by despatches from St.Petersburg and Constantinople. On 29 April, Loftus reported a conversation with Gortchakoff[15] during which the Russian Foreign Minister had declared that the Russian armies did not need Persian help, that it would be "an embarrassment," that it was of "no utility," and that it would bring the plague which was raging in Bagdad and was expected to "extend so as to embrace the theatre of

14. WO Confdl Paper 0653, pp.16-17, SSP.

15. Loftus to Derby, no.213A, very confdl, 29 April 1877, PRO/FO 65/966.

operations in Armenia."[16] A week earlier, on 21 April, Layard had reported a similar conversation with the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs who "attaches little importance to the military resources of Persia, and does not apprehend any attack on her part on the Bagdad frontier."[17] Indeed, large drafts had been withdrawn from the Syrian and Mesopotamian commands to bolster the armies directly opposed to the Russians.[18] All these reactions were extremely satisfying as indicating the negligible part that Persia would be likely to play in the event of war. It was also true, moreover, that the Government had since been assured by the Shah "as to Persia's being up to the present time free from any engagement with Russia, and as regards future contingencies" that it was "his sincere wish and intention to remain neutral all through the war."[19] But this statement, however true at the moment, would tend to lose its validity once Turkey had been defeated. Persia would then be exposed to the full weight of a Russian attack and might well find it prudent to do as she was told.[20]

It was against this contingency that the Indian Government in particular felt compelled to plan. MacGregor's project for the invasion of Persia and Russia from the Persian Gulf (later advocated at Simmons' instance by Major-General

16. WO Confdl Paper, 'The Armed Strength of Turkey etc...,' n.d., p.12, SSP.

17. Layard to Derby, no.313, 21 April 1877, PRO/FO 78/2569.

18. WO Confdl Paper, 'The Armed Strength of Turkey etc...,' n.d., p.12, SSP.

19. Thompson to Layard, 6 July 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50013.

20. Layard to Derby, no.347, confdl, 26 April; no.546, most confdl, 30 May 1877, PRO/FO 78/2571.

H.Ballard)[21] was dismissed by Roberts and Home on strategic grounds,[22] and by Surgeon-Major Evatt of the Indian Army Medical Department on sanitary grounds.[23] It was also rejected by such Persian experts as Sir Henry Rawlinson and Major O.St.John. In a lecture before the United Service Institution of India,[24] Major St.John described Persia as "a vast fortress penetrable by armies at comparatively few points" and he could not agree "that Persia could be used as a base for the attack of the Caucasus and the recent acquisitions of Russia in Central Asia." Rawlinson concurred:[25]

21. 'Memorandum regarding Military Operations against Persia by an army operating from the Persian Gulf: prepared at the request of Sir Lintorn Simmons by Col. Ballard,' 10 May 1877; 'Memorandum by Lt.-General Sir Lintorn Simmons on the Military Position of Affairs in the East,' 11 May 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2; 'Memorandum on Armenia as a Theatre of War,' C.M.MacGregor, 15 December 1876; 'Memorandum on the Aid which can be rendered Turkey,' n.d., loose papers, Roberts Papers.

22. 'Report etc...,' Capt. E.Baring, Cromer Papers, PRO/30/6/16; WO Confdl Paper 0636, SSP; Roberts to Johnson, 11 March 1877; 'Memorandum to consider the Measures which should be adopted in India in the event of England joining Turkey in the war against Russia,' secret, 4 June 1877, "Notes on the Central Asian Question and the Coast and Frontier Defence of India," loose papers, Roberts Papers.

23. 'Contributions to the Medico-Military Topography of the Persian Gulf and the Valley of the Euphrates and Tigris,' G.J.H.Evatt, "Report of the Army Medical Department, 1874," Military Parliamentary Papers, CXXXI, 1876, pt.II, Appdx.I, p.202, War Office Library.

24. Major O.St.John, "Persia: its political past, present and future," P.U.S.I.I., vol.7, 1878, pp.97-114.

25. WO Confdl Paper 0636, pp.112-13, SSP.

he described the Persian roads as "ill-adapted for the passage of either troops or artillery," and suggested with some sarcasm that with "a little labour and expense" they could be put "in as efficient a state" as they no doubt were "in the remote ages when Cyrus, Darius, Hystapes and Alexander led their mail-clad legions, their elephant trains, and unwieldy engines of war."

Under these conditions, complicated as they would be by the additional likelihood of a secondary Russian expeditionary force advancing towards India from Krasnovodsk along the northern fringe of Persia, fresh alternatives to military operations in Persia had to be found, based more directly upon fortress India and aimed at preventing that ominous junction of Russian military spheres of influence decreed by Romanoffski. As will be seen later, these entailed plans for the occupation and defence of Herat and the fomentation of rebellion among the Khanates. Since both policies were largely conditioned by the Afghan question, they will be discussed more fully later in considering the Indian Government's response, from May to July, to the imminent collapse of Turkey in Asia and Lomakin's trans-Caspian expedition towards Merv; but it is necessary to advert to them here as the fourth and final strategic consideration which, by causing yet another diversion of force, would govern, to some degree at least, the effectiveness of Russian military power in Asia Minor.

There could be little doubt that the Turkish Sultan, as Caliph, believed in the possibility of raising some kind of Moslem league, not perhaps as an absolute barrier to Russian advances in Turkey and Asia, but as a means of

sapping and delaying them until other, more concrete forms of assistance could be enlisted for the decisive battles ahead.[26] These hopes were reflected in the Turkish press which indulged in wild dreams of the thousands of volunteers that would come from Tunis, Egypt, Arabia, Central Asia, India and China;[27] and were loosely encouraged by unofficial envoys from Kashgar, Bokhara and Afghanistan.[28] Nevertheless, the War Office, while not doubting the possibility of local outbreaks, remained skeptical of a widespread movement succeeding on the scale appropriate to the situation unless "at the instigation of England, or there were a chance of Russia sustaining serious reverses in the war with Turkey."[29] It could not be denied, however, that it would not be wise, for reasons of internal Indian security, to alienate Moslem feeling, by not encouraging a force which, however vague and inchoate at the moment, might well turn out to be a military weapon of considerable magnitude and strength. There were of course serious drawbacks to its uncontrolled development, and it would be necessary to ensure that the movement should not be driven underground through violent official opposition. From the British point of view, however, the whole idea was grounded on a paradox, for the strategic conditions which made such a rising necessary - i.e. Russian

26. Unpublished memoirs,,vol.5, ff.42-4, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.38935; Layard to Lytton, pte, 14 June 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/4.

27. H.O.Dwight, Turkish Life in Wartime, New York, 1881, pp.104-5.

28. Unpublished memoirs, vol.5, ff.42-4; Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.38935; WO Confdl Paper 0653, p.3, SSP.

29. Ibid.

military successes in Turkey and Asia - were also those which rendered it impracticable; and those that made it practicable - i.e. serious Russian reverses - were also those that rendered it superfluous. But this could not be appreciated until the outcome of the Russo-Turkish war was certain; and if conditions were then unfavourable the only alternative would be to rely upon the direct effects of such local rebellions as could be stimulated for specific purposes.

From the foregoing analysis of the strategic considerations governing the likely degree of Turkish resistance and the implications of British intervention, it will have emerged that Turkish military policy would probably be defensive, supplemented and supported by such Caucasian and Central Asian risings, as it was possible, either independently or preferably with British assistance, to nurture and control. In the final result, it was clear that British operations in the Caucasus were contingent upon the security of the Dardanelles and Constantinople, and Indian operations in Central Asia upon the security of Herat: and until these were seen to be threatened no British action could be contemplated. But here again, British military policy seemed to rest on a paradox; for so long as these two points were occupied or seriously threatened by Russia, and Afghanistan retained its aloof position, no offensive action against Russia's most vulnerable areas - the Caucasus and Central Asia - could be planned with any certainty of success or decisive effect. The main issue of the crisis that arose with the war, therefore, lay in defining the academic degree of threat at any particular moment. Thus, although the Indian Government might urge that a Russian occupation of

Merv be made a casus belli, and might make preparations for that eventuality, Lord Salisbury, in refusing to comply, could not avoid the fundamental and inescapable contradiction of his position; that if Herat (or the Dardanelles) were made secure by pre-emptive occupation, it might not be necessary to go to war, but that if they were lost, and war ensued, it was no longer possible to strike a decisive blow or to counter in any effective way all the disadvantages that their loss would entail.

The course of the war-crisis verified these speculations. Within six weeks, Ardahan had fallen and Kars had been invested. Kemball's despatches recorded with depressing and at times alarming monotony the "inability of the Turks to withstand the progress of Russian invasion" because of "the unreadiness which distinguishes all their operations" and "the manifest inadequacy of their military resources." "There should be no delusion," he wrote, "without money and without efficient control the prospect is hopeless for the Turks."[30] Moreover, Turkish attempts to incite Mohammedan risings in the Caucasian rear had not met with much success. In a secret despatch on 13 May, Layard had reported a Turkish plan to land 10,000 Circassians on the Black Sea coast and, supported by Hobart's squadron, to raise the local tribes and cut the high-road to Tiflis; but in an accompanying 'very confidential' despatch of the same date,[31] he held out little

30. Kemball to Layard, tlgm, 14 May 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.456, 14 May 1877, PRO/FO 78/2571; same to same, 15 May 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.506, 24 May 1877, ibid; same to same, 17 June 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.692, 29 June 1877, PRO/FO 78/2575.

31. Layard to Derby, no.446, secret; no.447, very confdl, 13 May 1877, PRO/FO 78/2571; WO Confdl Paper 0653, p.25, SSP.

hope for its success. "Former experience," he wrote, "appears to prove that in their own country the Circassians are little to be depended upon, and they have shown in Turkey that they are more dangerous to their friends than to their enemies." Both Hobart and Baker had also been opposed to the expedition on the grounds that "the Turks cannot be depended upon" and that regular forces unless properly trained and led were unfit for such purposes.[32] Other spontaneous outbreaks in Abkhasia, Tchnechnia and Daghestan, although serious in themselves, remained local and were subsequently crushed. "If they continue of the present character," commented the Intelligence summary,[33] "they will not affect the result of the campaign."

It was this picture, so vividly portrayed by Kemball and the war correspondents, of a rapid stream of unbroken Russian victories, seemingly unaffected by revolt and culminating in the arrival of Grand Duke Michael to assume personal command of the forces concentrated for the reduction of Kars, with all that that might entail for the future prospects of Erzeroum and Asia Minor, the doubtful neutrality of Persia, the attitude of Afghanistan and the security of India, that from the earliest days of the war had absorbed the attention of the Government of India and determined the nature of its military policy.

In the months immediately preceding the outbreak of

32. Layard to Derby, pte, 23 May 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Layard,' Derby Papers; Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

33. WO Confdl Paper 0653, pp.25-6,38 and 51, SSP.

war, Lord Salisbury had sought to convince, or at least to assure, the Viceroy that the financial, social and military condition of Russia rendered her incapable of executing any seriously aggressive designs against Constantinople, Asia Minor or Central Asia which could be reasonably construed as preliminary steps towards the prospective invasion of India. Russia, "mined by revolution - on the very brink of bankruptcy - without one commander of any note: and having to contend even in the defence of her own frontiers against the difficulties of economy, distances and scanty population," was "powerless for a distant blow." Her military history, except against barbarous Orientals or Poles had been "one long record of defeat." Her finances, never good, were now desperate; her social condition one prolonged crisis "threatening at any moment of weakness" to break into socialist revolution. Her people were unwarlike, her officials corrupt and her rulers only competent when borrowed from Germany. It was true that Russia was "undoubtedly singularly strong in light cavalry" with which to cross the enormous distances which separated the Russian and Indian frontier outposts, or to nourish "some cheap agitation" among the Khanates; "but your frontier is so strong," the Indian Secretary assured Lytton, "and her communications would stretch along so vast a line, while your base is so near and so easily defended that I cannot profess to be much disquieted by her movements." Because Russia's condition removed all evident military threat from India it stood as "an important corollary" that diplomatic protests were both unnecessary and ineffectual and that it was "of little use making military preparations and discussing military

expeditions." Britain would simply find herself confronted with "unlucky native chiefs, who have no prestige to lose, no finances to ruin, whom great defeats will not disarm and whose enmity will be a permanent embarrassment."

Moreover, since Russia lacked the maritime resources in the Black Sea to constitute an immediate "serious menace to England" in the Mediterranean, and was already elbowed there by France, Italy, Austria and Greece, Constantinople was effectually dispossessed of all its strategic importance (though it would probably have to be defended "for reasons of prestige, which those who govern Oriental nations cannot afford to overlook") and British interests in the Mediterranean therefore could be better served and more directly defended from Egypt or Crete - pieds à terre which, Salisbury suggested, should be acquired before France grew to strong to object and before Germany became a naval power. In a phrase that was to apply to Constantinople and Merv alike, he wrote that "the effect of modern changes is constantly to diminish the value of strategic positions and to increase the value of pecuniary resources." In his assessment of the strategic importance of Constantinople, it is also clear that Salisbury missed, or chose to disregard, the whole significance of Moslem feeling. "We did not allow a few years ago the feelings of the Irish to affect the policy which on grounds of European interest we thought it right to pursue in Italy. It is somewhat startling to have our foreign policy in Europe prescribed to us by the people whom we conquered in the East. My feelings towards the Sultan under the circumstances resemble those which a Secretary of State in Elizabeth's time might have felt towards the Pope...." It was on these three

interdependent issues - the nature of an aggressive military policy in Central Asia, the strategic importance of Constantinople and the significance of Moslem feeling - all of which sprang from a basic appreciation of Russian strength, that the Viceroy fundamentally differed.[34]

Lord Lytton believed that Russian advances in Asia were "a very real, a very close and a very ponderable danger;" that "the result of distant extension of empire" was to increase rather than diminish the scale and vigour of military operations; that "the contact of the Russian and English Empires along an extensive frontier in Central Asia" was "an event as certain, in the natural course of things, as the result of any simple astronomical calculation;" and that "contact" invariably meant "conflict." He dismissed as "trash" and "puling nonsense" the philanthropic 'civilising' interpretation given to Russian imperialism by Grant Duff and the Times. "Unfortunately," he declared, "these consolatory theories, like dreams of universal peace and general disarmament" are contradicted by a sadly stern experience. Geographical contact between civilised nations in Europe has neither abolished wars nor rendered unnecessary the maintenance of military establishments. On the contrary, it has lamentably increased the intensity of the former, and the magnitude of the latter."[35]

Although these remarks described the prospective

34. Salisbury to Lytton, pte, 16 February, 7 March and 27 April 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/2.

35. Lytton to Salisbury, 21 and 28 May, 23 June 1877, ibid, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/2; same to Mallet, 14 March 1877, ibid; G.of I. to S.of S., no.21, secret, 2 July 1877, Political and Secret Letters from India, vol.954.

situation in Central Asia, it was clear that if they were applied to Persia and Turkey (as indeed they could be) the danger to India would be multiplied three-fold. In these circumstances, therefore, it was imperative to keep the two great military empires apart through the maintenance of a predominant moral and political (and if necessary military) influence in the buffer states. This automatically placed a premium upon the demarcation of and respect for specific spheres of influence, at once heightened the sensitivity towards and tended to rigidify the attitude towards frontier boundaries, and magnified the moral more than the military importance of strategic positions. What Lytton feared most of all, especially after the failure of the Peshawur Conference, was the very band of Cossacks and the "cheap agitation" that Salisbury so lightly dismissed; for a predominant Russian influence in Afghanistan (or Persia and Turkey) would effectively bring about that perilous contiguity he wished to avert, and would render impracticable the only means and approach by which a decisive blow could be struck at Russia in Central Asia (in the same way that a preclusive Russian influence at Constantinople and Tehran would prevent an effectual blow through the Caucasus). He never ceased to stress that "the danger we anticipate to India is not that arising from an adventurous Russian invasion" but the "far more serious danger inevitably involved in the extension of Russian influence over Afghanistan, till that State becomes a mere tool in the hands of Russia, powerless to resist her demands." When this occurs, he predicted:[36]

36. G.of I. to S.of S., no.21, secret, 2 July 1877, PSLFI, vol.954.

Our Indian frontier armaments, instead of being calculated as they now are, to resist mere mountain tribes, without organisation or combined action, will have to be recast on a scale fit to cope with organised and combined attacks supported by European skill, arms, money and, possibly, even troops. India itself will then become exposed to an influence rival and hostile to her own, and with all the prestige of success upon its side. Every passing cloud of disagreement in European politics will then at once make itself felt throughout the length of our frontier, and send a thrill of hope to every discontented mind in India, and we shall then be bound, beyond escape, to accept, in a hopelessly unfavourable position, the struggle for supremacy in the East, whenever that struggle is forced upon us.

The antidotes to this situation - a situation bound to be aggravated with the outbreak of war - were already clear. He remained unmoved by "the talisman of diplomatic remonstrance" and refused to believe in "the possibility of arresting the advance of Russia in Central Asia by negociation or compact with the Cabinet in St.Petersburg." Instead, Lytton advocated a policy of "sternly decisive inactivity" combined with "unscrupulousness;" or, in more practical terms, a policy of diplomatic counter-intrigue through secret agents stationed at strategic points such as Tashkent, Balkh and Maimena along the invasion route to Russia. In a sense, this was the policy suggested by Salisbury; but there was one essential difference: Lytton believed that all successful diplomacy, however unofficial or underhand, was backed by "the known possession of military force, and the generally understood determination to use it." In his opinion, "the three most successful diplomacies of modern times" had been the Italian, Prussian and the Russian - all of which, in their way, had been made possible by a proved determination to use military force. Can anything, Lytton

asked, be "more marked than the military character of Russian diplomacy:"[37]

> Her diplomacy is either used, as in the case of Servia and the Christian provinces of Turkey, (where she has for years been arming, drilling, paying, and plotting with the subjects and vassals of the Porte), to cover unavowed military proceedings; or else her military force is used to enforce her diplomacy on all occasions; when Russia is, with regret, obliged to point out that, if she does not get what she wants, she will be unable to restrain the populations she has secretly armed and organised, or the ardour of her own armies. Now, in Central Asia the success of Russia's diplomacy is entirely due to the fact that her diplomatic agents, however unofficial, are everywhere regarded as the scouts and avants couriers of her armies; and that both are perceived to be steadily advancing; that, rightly or wrongly, all her Asiatic neighbours believe her to be utterly unscrupulous in her recourse to the sword; and that she both menaces and promises, as against us, more than we can, as against her.

Unless the British Empire in India, therefore, undertook counter-measures similar but more vigorous in kind, scattered agents thickly among the Khanates, rectified the mountain frontier in such a manner as to admit the exertion of instant military pressure upon the buffer states, prepared "a force sufficient to support diplomatic representations... and to make a timely military demonstration in case of need" and otherwise remodelled her army to fight a European rather than an Asiatic enemy, "so long will our diplomacy be heavily handicapped: and I hope you will not expect too much of it."

Several implications of this policy seem clear. It is manifest that a policy of intrigue in peace is not many steps from a policy of insurrectionary warfare in times of crisis: indeed they are aspects of the same means operating

37. Lytton to Salisbury, 28 May 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/2.

towards the same end under different conditions; the common instrument would have been at least partially prepared and focussed. It was unlikely therefore that the Viceroy would be averse to encouraging, should the occasion demand, any form of 'unofficial' war, whether local or in the form of a league of Moslem states, especially if it formed part of a wider, more active plan for containing or neutralising the effects of recent Russian advances in Asia.[38]

In this context, the question of the maintenance of a British "haut du pavillon" at Constantinople became "the real key to the whole position:" its importance was strategic in the widest sense. In Lytton's opinion, "the first instinct of a supreme Military Power is to become a maritime one;" and Russia established throughout northern Turkey and at Constantinople would constitute a serious and ineradicable threat to British maritime supremacy in the Mediterranean calling for a vast increase in naval armaments and expenditure, while at the same time sealing one of the decisive approaches to her territory. Once dispossessed of Constantinople and therefore of maritime supremacy, there could be no adequate substitute for either: the maintenance of such alleged strategic points as Egypt or Crete (as suggested by Salisbury), which anyway involved "a heavy addition to our financial burdens and political liabilities" and were useless as auxiliaries to sea-power while Constantinople remained, would become both impracticable and superfluous since they depended upon command of the sea and "not it upon them." But if these narrowly strategic implications affected most

38. Lytton to Carnarvon, pte, 21 January 1877, ibid.

the maritime policy of Britain, the broader politico-religious ones, involving as they did the citadel of Islam, crucially affected the continental military policy of India. "There is no getting over the fact," wrote Lytton, "that the British Empire of India is a Mahamedan Power, and it entirely depends on the policy of H.M.G. whether the sentiment of our Mahamedan subjects is to be an immense security, or an immense danger to us....The lives of all your officers and your European subjects in India mainly depend on the course of your Eastern policy, and its freedom from all subserviency to Russia." To allow Russia to occupy Constantinople, however temporarily; to be provoked even into its pre-emptive seizure without the consent of the Porte; or to connive at the acquisition of fresh bases at Turkish expense would infallibly produce the conditions for a second great mutiny.[39]

Thus, in Lytton's opinion, a vigorous military policy in Central Asia was only possible if British policy towards Turkey did not alienate Moslem feeling. If Britain remained neutral in a Russo-Turkish war, therefore, and neither Constantinople nor Asia Minor were seriously threatened, the Viceroy could see certain advantages to Indian frontier interests: firstly, it would "render it extremely difficult for the heads of neighbouring Mahomedan states...to form or avow any intimate relations with Russia;" secondly, in proportion as it absorbed and concentrated public opinion in England, it would relieve the Indian Government of "its worst danger - the untimely curiosity and criticism of the Home Parliament and Press;" thirdly, it would "give Russia

39. Lytton to Salisbury, pte, 5 April, 25 April and 21 May 1877, ibid.

too much to do in Europe for any exhuberant activity in Central Asia;" fourthly, so long as the chance remains open to her of an eventual English alliance, or English support in a future conference to settle the terms of peace," Russia would "be unwise (and we hope disinclined) to assume an openly unfriendly attitude towards Indian interests;" and finally, "if, nevertheless, Kauffman, on his own hook, does stir up - or if Shere Ali stirs up - any of our Mahomedan neighbours to commit positive acts of aggression upon us, then we shall have the most unanswerable justification for action at the time when action may be most efficient and least exposed to opposition from the only quarters whence opposition could be hurtful." Even without such provocation, it might even be possible by stretching the definition of neutrality to encourage Turkish attempts to turn the sword of Islam against Russia. But this situation, however satisfactory at the moment, was bound to be upset by Russian successes in Asia Minor and the possibility of a coup de main at Constantinople. In this case, the threat to India would be more real and direct than it had ever been; and the prestige of victory, in nullifying the attempts to stimulate indigenous Moslem sympathies and revolt, might well precipitate that ominous preponderance of influence in the buffer states which it was the foundation of Lytton's policy to prevent. At the same time, he would probably feel freer to take more decisive action: but this, too, was bound to be scrutinised and complicated by an anxious and discordant Press and Parliament, and invariably thwarted by a sarcastic and imperious Secretary of State.[40]

40. Ibid.

These considerations largely shaped the Indian Government's response to Salisbury's suggestion of 11 May (made in furtherance of the Cabinet's published policy of 6 May and probably on the basis of Simmons' and Ballard's memoranda) concerning "the possibility of schemes for defence on the edge of the Persian Gulf." Lytton's conclusion, independently supported by the Military Member of Council, Colonel E.Johnson, and no doubt by Colley, was "a very strong one:"[41]

> Assuming that Russia is allowed to remain in possession of Kars, Erzeroum, and the northern portion of Turkish Armenia, she would then have two sea bases - one on the Caspian, the other on the Black Sea, between them and a commanding land position; behind her back an enormous military reserve - a political position ensuring her practical control over the policy of Persia. Against such a combination of rare advantages, the Government of India could not, unaided, maintain, even at great cost, a military station at the head of the Persian Gulf. Against such heavy odds, it seemed to us, that the military maintenance of this point, where we are weakest, would completely cripple our means of action of defending the north-west frontier, where we are strongest....
>
> A military station on the north of the Persian Gulf would...be dangerously far from its base in India, and easily assailable by Russia, and Persia, or both combined.... If not permanently strong enough to resist such a combined attack, the position would be useless. It could not compete with Russia's position either in Persia, or Turkish Armenia, for command of the Euphrates Valley; and so far from securing our possession of the Persian Gulf, it might invite attack on a point where we should find ourselves weakest. If Russia ever wanted to paralyse us in Central Asia, where she is weakest, she would only have to menace our position near Mohommera....The only means whereby we can hold the Persian Gulf in case of need, without great cost and risk, would be a purely maritime occupation of it - a strong fleet and ppssession, perhaps, of the islands.

41. Lytton to Salisbury, 17 and 21 May 1877, ibid.

In addition to the plain strategic, there were considerations of health and internal Indian security. The Persian Gulf was known to be pestiferous and plague-ridden; moreover, if the Indian Government were "suspected by our Mohammedan subjects of active connivance with Russia in the spoliation of Turkey by compensating Persia for the occupation of Mohommera...we should probably be confronted by an internal embarrassment sufficiently serious to paralyse all external action on our part; we should not only have to reckon on a real jehad all round our frontier, but in every Anglo-Indian home there would be a traitor, a foe, and possibly an assassin." Although Salisbury agreed that "it would be very difficult to hold any portion of the shores of the Persian Gulf, if it was not contiguous with our own dominions, and only accessible by sea," he would not accept Lytton's argument that its occupation would seriously prejudice Moslem feeling. In the event, therefore, a gunboat was sent into Persian waters, and the Indian Government did no more than carry out preliminary investigations into the implications of occupation.[42]

There can be no doubt that the fundamental cause of the Viceroy's refusal to countenance a dispersal of his armed power to the Persian Gulf was a growing consciousness of the predominance of Russian military power in south-west Asia. It has been generally accepted that Lomakin's expedition to Kizil Arvat in early May was the immediate and prime mover in the proceedings that led to the celebrated Merv despatch of 2 July; and less attention has therefore been accorded the significance of Russian successes in Asia Minor

42. Same to same, 21 May 1877, ibid.

which, magnified by fear and rumour, provided immense mythical value to Lomakin's operations and threatened to seduce the native mind into believing that this was but the forerunner of a mighty trans-Caspian expedition, backed by all the prestige of victory and the tangible resources of the Caucasus, Syria and Persia, to effect that junction of western with eastern spheres of operation deemed so essential to further operations against Afghanistan and India. To the Anglo-Indian, and especially to the Indian Government, these fears were not wholly alarmist or strategically insupportable.

- As early as January, it had been suspected that Lomakin's expedition, which had been preparing since November, was intended "to take possession of the route between Kizil Arvat and Balkh," and Consul Ricketts at Tiflis had urged upon the Government's attention the consequent danger to Merv and Herat resulting from a Russian occupation of Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria and the Euphrates Valley in a war against Turkey.[43] But in the hopeful days following the Constantinople Conference, this information does not appear to have been forwarded to the Indian Government; and its significance only became belatedly apparent against the background of impending operations in Asia Minor and the discovery of fresh intelligence which seemed to elevate such an expedition conclusively onto the plane of ominous feasibility. In April, Captain G.Napier, on special duty in Persia, reported that a Russian occupation of Kizil Arvat, in bringing them 150

43. Loftus to Derby, no.36, secret, 2 February 1876, PRO/FO 65/966; Ricketts to Derby, no.3, 5 January 1877, PRO/FO 65/989; Thompson to Derby, no.28, confdl, 22 March 1877, ibid.

miles closer to Merv, in fact opened "a new parallel" around which abundant supplies and carriage could be collected for subsequent operations against Merv, Herat and possibly India; it brought them into collision with tribes whom they would feel bound to subdue and absorb; and it turned the great Khivan desert, the last natural obstacle to any Russian advance into Afghanistan. Equally significant, Kizil Arvat was incorporated on Russian maps as their legitimate territory and was connected to Merv, not by a desert as was generally supposed, but by a broad and fertile valley along which a well-equipped force could march in eighty days or from three to four months. "The occupation of Kizil Arvat," Napier concluded, "is not only a fresh evidence of a fixed design of aggression, but it is the boldest and the most important measure yet adopted."[44]

As the Russian advances in Asia Minor continued throughout May and June, the Viceroy and his principal military advisers became increasingly preoccupied with the effects that this apparent Russian spearhead of intrigue towards Merv, compounded by the known subversive activities at Cabul, might have upon the unsettled state of native feeling in India. This was attributed "indirectly to an inarticulate dissatisfied consciousness" that in reality, the mountain frontier was in no military sense a real physical barrier so long as the Indian Government remained deprived of the control of the outer debouches, and that the real controllers of frontier policy in Whitehall were less sincere than they

44. 'Report on Turcoman Tribes occupying districts between the Caspian and the Oxus,' 29 February 1877, encl. in G.of I. to S.of S., no.35, secret, 28 August 1877, PSLFI, vol.956.

professed to be in India. Again and again in his letters to Salisbury, Lytton insisted that the mountain barrier, as it presently stood, was like "a fortress without a glacis;" that the arguments for awaiting attack behind "our stone wall" were "fallacious" and "entirely superceded by the present state of military science." "Were they referred to a Committee of Moltkes or even of our own Staff College," he was convinced "they would be condemned with derision.... In modern warfare the army that can quickest assume an effective aggressive is the army most sure of success; the army which is obliged to remain on the defensive, and accept decisive battle on its own soil, is pretty sure to be defeated."[45]

In view of the likely rapidity of a Russian approach, whether military or political, to Merv (Haines and Johnson believed that India would be at war with Russia within six months), it was imperative to gain time to put the defences of India upon an efficient footing; and this could only be done by taking immediate preventive measures and not relying upon the ineffectual cures of an enfeebled diplomacy or encouraging or awaiting a regular defensive war which could only be fought under disadvantageous strategic conditions. In a series of long letters to Salisbury during the last week of May which formed the substance of a telegram on or about the 30th,[46] Lytton, on the basis of a masterly

45. Haines to Lytton, pte, 2 and 16 June; confdl, 25 June 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/5; Lytton to Cavagnari, 17 June 1877, ibid, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/2; same to Haines, 19 June 1877; same to Salisbury, pte, 21 March 1877, ibid.

46. Lytton to Salisbury, 21 and 28 May 1877, ibid.

appreciation by Roberts, outlined a possible scheme of action and asked the Government for its immediate sanction.

Now Roberts' memorandum provided a most comprehensive analysis of Indian military policy and the first to be produced under the new conditions of Russian advances in Asia Minor. It was based on "certain hypotheses" that "must be accepted before any conclusions can be arrived at." These were seven in number: firstly, "that England does not intend Russia to gain possession of Turkish Armenia and thus secure command of the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates;" secondly, "that England is determined to protect Egypt and keep open the passage of the Suez Canal;" thirdly, "that England will not permit the occupation of Constantinople, or the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire in Europe;" fourthly, "that the action of Persia is extremely doubtful, but is more than probable she is secretly allied to Russia;" fifthly, "that all intercourse with Afghanistan is broken off, and that the Amir is known to be hostile, and has been endeavouring to rouse the tribes on the north-west frontier against us;" sixthly, "that no increase to the British force in India can be expected beyond what would be required to place corps on a war footing;" and finally, "that any operations in Europe would probably be undertaken by the army from England and the Mediterranean."

Roberts envisaged several possible roles for the Indian army: the occupation of Egypt; expeditions from the Persian Gulf, Syria or the south-east coast of the Black Sea "for operations eastward against Persia, or northwards via Bagdad and Mosul towards Armenia, or north-eastwards via Kermanshah and Tabriz towards Georgia;" expeditions to

Herat "in view to a possible movement westward towards the Caspian, or northwards towards Merv" or "into Turkestan for the purpose of driving the Russians out of the Khanates;" and finally, "sending officers to Turkish Arabia and Armenia to assist the Turkish Armies, and towards Central Asia in view to raising the Turcomans and other tribes in the neighbourhood of the Khanates." Roberts instantly dismissed the idea of sending any considerable expedition separately to Egypt on the grounds that it could be "so much more easily reached from England" where "facilities for embarking and equipping troops" were "so infinitely greater" than in India. Moreover, the problems of providing sufficient sea-transport for any amphibious expedition based on India, which was primarily and necessarily concerned with a continental or frontier military policy, were overwhelming, and likely to run up costs comparable to those incurred during the Abyssinian expedition of 1867. These arguments applied with equal force to operations conducted in support of Turkish forces in Armenia or Georgia, either from the Persian Gulf, Alexandretta or the Black Sea. In every case he regarded the physical difficulties and consequent loss of time as decisive objections. It was evident, he wrote, that an expedition from India towards Armenia or Georgia by any of these routes "could only be accomplished with considerable difficulty and loss of time: the equipment of the army would require a vast amount of costly preparation, and though it is within the bounds of possibility that such an expedition could be carried out successfully it is one that does not commend itself and which should only be undertaken in an extraordinary emergency."

As to operations in Persia, he admitted that they would be easier to conduct and support because "nearer our base" and that "a small, well-equipped force would probably suffice to bring the Persians to terms without proceeding further inland than Shiraz or Shuster." On the other hand, he appreciated that "a force operating in South Persia could have no direct influence on a war between Russia and England, and would afford no material assistance to Turkey. The force would be locked up in a tract of country which could probably be brought to terms by a few men-of-war." Roberts agreed with St.John that the real and immediate danger to India lay "to the east of the Caspian," and that Russian intrigues in Persia were designed "to see us drawn off from her lines of advance in Asia, and to prevent us taking any action in Armenia, the north of Persia, or Afghanistan." Having committed the Indian armies to futile operations in the Persian interior, therefore, "the Russians would endeavour to induce the Persians to besiege Herat, assisting them with officers and material. A Persian garrison in Herat would, under existing circumstances, be tantamount to a Russian occupation." It was therefore necessary, in Roberts' view, "that we should avoid all military complications" in Persia, "and trust to our fleet in keep the shores of the Persian Gulf quiet while we devote our whole strength to checkmating the advances of Russia in the North of Persia, the northwest frontier of Afghanistan, and in Central Asia."

The "nature, extent, and direction" of such a campaign would depend upon certain conditions which he was careful to enumerate and examine: firstly, the strength of the Russian armies that could be employed in Central

Asia; secondly, the disposition of the tribes and Khanates in the event of a Russo-British campaign; thirdly, the objects to be gained by an advance to Herat, and possibly towards Merv and the Caspian; fourthly, the opposition to be expected in this direction; fifthly, the action to be taken regarding Afghanistan; sixthly, the possible re-establishment of British influence in Persia and the maintenance of her frontier towards the Elbourz mountains and Attreck valley; seventhly, frontier tribal relations; eighthly, "the practicability of the several routes by which an army could advance;" and finally, the size and composition of the British Indian expeditionary force.

Roberts estimated that the Russian regular force available for operations in Turkestan numbered roughly 30,000 men and 72 field guns. While the infantry were indifferently armed, and in heavy guns there was "nothing better than old Bokharian or Kokandian smooth-bore muzzle-loaders" of locally-manufactured bronze, there were large numbers of auxiliary irregular cavalry or mounted infantry. The nature of the terrain and communications, however, was such that no reinforcements could arrive at Khiva, Bokhara or Tashkent within five or six months of the news reaching St.Petersburg that a British force was marching into Central Asia. Thus the effective opposition that would be encountered would largely depend upon the resultant struggle to win the sympathies of the Khanates. Roberts suggested that "emissaries from the Porte could doubtless help our cause by proclaiming a religious war," but he doubted whether "at this distance, and without knowing much more of the feelings of the people than we do" it would be "possible

to say to what extent they would be successful." Nevertheless, it could safely be assumed that Russia would not be in a position to attempt a serious invasion from the north for some time.

More probably, it would come from the Caucasian and trans-Caspian regions. The Russians, observed Roberts, "have never lost sight of the fact that Russia proper is their main base, and that the shortest, quickest and most convenient route from this base to India is by the Caspian Sea." Once established at Merv, Russia would soon annex and occupy the Khanates, Badakshan and Kashgar, "thus making the Russian frontier conterminous with those of Afghanistan and Kashmir." In these circumstances it was "absolutely necessary for India to be in possession of Herat, and of some position such as Balkh covering the passes through which the line of communication from Samarkand to India, via Cabul, leads." From such a position, "England might view without anxiety the extension of Russian power in Central Asia. Her right would be protected by the impassable range of mountains lying between Kashgar and the Pamir; the Hindu Kush, covered by a force at Balkh, would be her centre; and Herat, her left, which, while checking the further advance of the Russians from the west, would enable her to regain lost influence in Persia, give her absolute control over Afghanistan, and bring her in alliance with the Turcoman tribes." Afghanistan, therefore, was "the point to which our thoughts and energies must be directed." In the improbable eventuality that the Amir proved friendly, the obvious objective for an expeditionary force would be Tashkent via the Oxus and the Khanates. In that case,

assuming an abundance of forage and supplies, it would probably reach Tashkent in seven months or even less, depending upon the cooperation of the tribes. However, "should the contrary be the case," noted Roberts, it would be "impossible to say how long it would take to reach Tashkent, and it would be difficult to decide on the strength and composition of the army to accomplish such an undertaking. The force would have to be large enough to occupy Afghanistan, to keep open communication for upwards of 1000 miles and to be able to meet on Russian territory an army the strength of which it is not possible to calculate, but which is known to be considerable." An occupation of Herat, however, would not present the same difficulties and possessed positive advantages. It was based directly on India with short lines of communication; indeed from a strategical point of view it could be considered a natural outwork to the mountain frontier. Its approach was marked by comparative ease of movement; it could be "adopted at any season of the year." There was reason to believe "that Kandahar could be occupied without much opposition," and that the flanks of any march could be protected from attack from Cabul by the occupation of Kalat-i-Gilzai. Moreover, "a moderate sized army would suffice for the occupation of Herat, irrespective of the attitude of Afghanistan, for keeping open the communications with our base, and for placing a force in the field ...to cope with anything that could be brought against it under existing circumstances." The results of an occupation of Herat were equally compelling and decisive. It would "bring Afghanistan to terms...reassure the Turcomans and place them in immediate connection with us...in all probability

regain our lost influence in Persia...effectually check the advance of Russia towards India from the southern shores of the Caspian and the lower valley of the Oxus... and finally, enable us to raise a force of Afghans, Turcomans, and Persians sufficient to drive the Russians from the southern and eastern shores of the Caspian, and by raising the Circassians to make her position on the western shores extremely dangerous."

The arrangements for such a campaign would require the strengthening of all regiments and batteries to full war establishment, the raising of two camel corps, the recall of all officers on leave in England and an increase in the quota of Australian horses. Sappers, pioneers, munitions and stores should be sent to Quetta to prepare defensive posts, construct roads and erect telegraph lines on the road to Candahar. Bullocks and transport should be concentrated at selected points; and a railway constructed from Sukkur to Quetta. Officers should be sent "towards Herat, Merv and Balkh, to make themselves acquainted with the resources and nature of the country; to arrange, if possible, for supplies and the free passage of troops and convoys; to organise the Turcoman cavalry...to ascertain what assistance we could expect from them in men and horses" and "to endeavour to gain influence amongst the tribes between Yarkand and the Caspian." To accomplish these objects a force of 31,150 men, 8,250 horses and 98 guns would be necessary; 10,000 between Quetta and Kandahar; 10,000 more between Kandahar and Herat; and a further 10,000 for operations beyond Herat.

Lytton's proposals were three-fold. Firstly,

Roberts

for what it was worth before the Russian Military Governors became "too flushed with victory," continued Russian intrigue at Cabul and their occupation of Merv might well be made the subject of a public remonstrance and a casus belli. Although a diplomatic remonstrance would probably only elicit the usual disingenuous reply, the distinct specification of a casus belli might well go far towards curbing the "K.C.B. mania" of Russian Generals, and enforce at least the temporary respite needed. In the second place, because Kauffman's intrigues at Cabul had effectively blocked any "attempt to strike a deadly blow at Russia," "all we could do would be to strengthen our defensive position and improve it permanently" by the seizure and occupation of Kandahar and the Kurram - operations which "would go far to break up the Afghan power and would leave us with such a strong grip upon Cabul" that if war did break out in Central Asia "we need not then fear the intrigues of any future Kauffmans." Although he suspected that Haines and Johnson would "strongly" urge the occupation of Herat as well when called upon to produce plans of operation, he felt "that it should be recognised that even if we took Merv, and occupied Herat, we should not have seriously shaken the heart of the Russian power in Central Asia." This was the essence of his third and most important recommendation. Lytton believed that if the defence of India were to be entrusted "exclusively" to the means of diplomacy, then "we ought to have begun long ago to apply to all the regions threatened by the advancing power of Russia that sort of diplomacy" which Russia had so successfully applied in the Balkans:[47]

47. Ibid; 'Memorandum to consider the measures etc...,' F.S.Roberts, secret, 4 June 1877, loose papers, Roberts Papers.

That is to say, we ought to have already organised, in all these states and territories, a strong party of resistance; we ought to have convinced that party of our determination, as well as our power, not only to protect its interests, but to satisfy its ambition, or punish its subordination; we ought to have made it feel that, practically, its fortunes depended on our own; and, having thus secured the command and direction of it, we ought to have held it well in hand, ready to be launched at any critical moment, as our advance guard against Russia....

Even now such a proposition was not entirely hopeless. "Well, will you allow me to prevent or at least postpone a Russian occupation of Merv by intrigue, i.e. diplomacy?" he asked, "I think I can do this if elbow room be given me:"

I have sent Captain Butler to the Chief of the Tekke-Turcomans or rather permitted him to go, on a purely unofficial and personal expedition. It is understood that, if he gets his throat cut, we are under no obligation to cut anyone elses's. He travels as a private sportsman; he takes with him not a scrap of paper, nor even a verbal message from the Government of India; and the object of his mission is to collect information concerning the real powers of resistance of the Turcomans, the imminence of the danger to them from Russia, their feelings regarding a Russian conquest, their disposition towards Persia, Afghanistan, and ourselves and the extent to which they are prepared to resist Russia....

Butler's previous explorations had shown that the Turcomans were "numerous and warlike, and that a very moderate amount of secret organisation, assistance and encouragement, on our part, would enable them to make a formidable stand, rendering extremely difficult to Russia, with her necessarily limited forces, any attempt to plant her foot upon Merv;" and Lytton did not doubt that his proposal if sanctioned and expedited at once would result in "a sudden check to the advance of Russia, which is as yet quite unexpected and unprepared for by her; and which, at the very worst,

would give our diplomacy time to 'diplomatise' from a new vantage ground."

These proposals, the sole object of which was to gain time, were coolly received in London by a Secretary of State whose sense of conspiracy and whose commitment to a policy of personal obstructionism kept them from a Cabinet about to receive the full flow and force of the alarmist despatches of Kemball, Dickson and Layard concerning the security of Constantinople. Salisbury informed Lytton that Turkey was "a mere accident; a spark that may inflame a combustible heap but not in itself of much moment;" that, except for Constantinople, the Cabinet "do not care about anything else; for the Suez Canal, Egypt, and the Persian Gulf...are not likely to be the object of attack in the present war." Moreover, Russia had not yet crossed the Danube and was not to do so for another month. Although the Russian armies had occupied Ardahan, they had not yet invested Kars. Although preliminary investigations had been made as to war readiness, and the most rudimentary stages of preparation had been initiated, it was clear by June that little had been, or indeed could be, done by Britain alone on the scale called for by the situation; and the unsatisfactory and inconclusive negociations with Austria were soon to result in a decision, regardless of its obvious Indian implications, not to oppose even a temporary Russian occupation of Constantinople. It was against this unreal background, so lacking in urgency and a clear appreciation of the Indian predicament and dominated by a sense of military helplessness, that Salisbury levelled his objections at Lytton's proposals.

Salisbury's argument turned almost wholly upon the question of the casus belli (and subsequently by implication upon the proposal for 'unofficial' war).[48] He pointed out several reasons why it would be impossible to accompany a diplomatic remonstrance with a threat of war. In the first place, he was not satisfied that Kizil Arvat was "not already part of Russia;" that maps disagreed and that he was unable "to discover any official evidence on which their delimitation rests." "We have therefore," he noted, "no documentary basis whatever for addressing Russia as if she was a wrongdoer in the matter, or for threatening her on the strength of her recent action." "Another serious objection" was that "such a menace would make it impossible" for Russia to recede. "I should think," he wrote, "that a diplomatic remonstrance would procure from the Russians an assurance that they did not mean to touch Merv, and that after all is the only thing we should obtain by a threat of war." But "the main difficulty," in Salisbury's opinion, was "that a threat of war means absolutely nothing." A war between Russia and England was "like a fight between a shark and a wolf. They may show any amount of mutual animosity: but after snapping at each other they can do nothing more than pass on:"

> Russia knows perfectly well that she is unassailable by us. The experience of 1854 proved to her that Cronstadt was too strong to be attacked with success. She has no longer a vulnerable point at Sebastopol. And without a military ally a land invasion would be ridiculous. We have at our disposal about 40,000 men, and possibly, by the greatest efforts, we might raise them to 60,000. What could such a handful do, as an invading army, against 600,000 conscripts? There is absolutely no point at which we could attack her with any

48. Salisbury to Lytton, pte, 1.15 and 22 June 1877, ibid, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/2.

real chance of doing her serious injury....The result, of course, is that Russia, being unassailable to our arms, is deaf to our diplomacy.

Moreover, even if Russia in the course of the war gained "a few strategic positions," Salisbury believed that the effect of developments in modern artillery was constantly to diminish their value, and that their possession therefore imposed increasing financial liabilities without affording commensurate strategic advantages. On the basis of a private letter from Haines to the Duke of Cambridge "breathing war in the style of the Morning Post and Lord Bury rolled into one" which He described to Derby as showing "the kind of spirit which dominates the military counsels of the Government of India," he cautioned Lytton that "the strong wine" of expert professional opinion was apt to exaggerate the strategic importance of positions such as Kars, Erzeroum, Kizil Arvat and Merv unless it was diluted "by a very large admixture of insipid common sense:"

If Erzeroum or Kizil Arvat belonged directly or indirectly to us I could understand fighting for them. But in themselves nobody pretends that it matters to us whether they are held by Hottentots or Esquimaux. Their only importance, is that from these Russia may come nearer us. But will the possession of them make it easier to the Russians to come nearer us? Or will this increased facility - if any - be worth averting at the cost of 200 millions of money - and men in proportion. At all events I have never seen any attempt to estimate in detail the value of the strategic advantages; of which the price is set so high that it is thought expedient to prefer the cost of a gigantic war.... The best view I can form leads me in the opposite direction - that these possessions will be of exactly the same value as Cabul or Nepal would be to us - they will bring in nothing - will cost enormously - and so will wound Russia in the point where she is most liable to injury.

Even if it were admitted that Russia was vulnerable

in Central Asia, and that these positions acquired accordingly a measure of strategic importance, there were such difficult, if not insuperable, logistic problems involved in their retention and defence that the idea of a Central Asian expedition for this purpose seemed "visionary." "At what sort of cost would you maintain the supply of men, food, ammunition, transport, across the vast distance that lies between Sukkur and Merv, about 900 miles, or 100 days' march," he asked, "those things were done in the days of Alexander and Hannibal; but it cannot be done with modern 'impedimenta.' At least nothing of the kind has been done by any of the great Military Powers of the Continent. There may have been small Russian expeditions against barbarous tribes extending for a considerable distance; but they form no precedent for an expedition which would, at the end of its 900 miles, find a large European army ready to fight it. The task would be hopeless enough if there were nothing but distance and bad roads, heat and cold, to contend with. But, as you know, the lines of communication would be open to the attacks of a nation not now friendly, and even when friendliest, always treacherous:"

> We might arm, officer, and organise the Turcomans - and throw them upon the Russian borders. It is possible that in this way we might inflict some humiliation upon Russia. I do not think you would take any fortified places for the Russians like the Turks fight well behind walls, and your base would be too distant for you to be able to carry on a regular siege in European fashion. But you might defeat the Cossacks, if they stayed to meet you, and scour the country. But would this result be worth its cost? I do not speak merely of its cost to the resources of India - though that would be heavy enough: but its cost to England. We should have, for the sake of this Central Asian raid, to live in a state of war. Our commerce would be exposed to the depredations of Alabamas - our harbours, and commercial ports, and

coaling ports would be exposed to insult - and in the accidental absence of an ironclad - to ransom. To these incidents of war we may submit for an adequate cause: but when you are considering the pros and cons of a Central Asian expedition to arrest the Russians some 600 miles the other side of Merv, they deserve to be weighed. The real issue is between two policies - Shall we wait to fight the Russians at Candahar: or shall we go forward to fight them at Kizil Arvat or Charjui. Of course, in the word 'fighting' I include sending other people to fight: I do not suppose a Russian soldier could appear on the Helmund, or an English soldier on the Attreck. But the principal element of victory is a good choice of a field: and that position is best which, being strong in itself is nearer to your base. I cannot therefore understand the prudence of presenting the enemy with that advantage. In this I am not advocating defensive as opposed to offensive warfare: that is quite another matter. Your resolution to fight, once taken, your first step would probably be against the enemy's overgrown line of communication. But though your warfare should not be defensive, your policy should be; when the difference between the two policies expresses a line of communication in any case of enormous length.

Salisbury's final observations were reserved for the question of the practicability of 'unofficial' war. "Is there any instance," he asked, "of such a warfare being conducted against one civilised power by another? I do not mean that there is anything inadvisable in it - but is it possible?" Since "you could not submit to your allies being beaten and their territory conquered in a struggle brought on at your instigation," it "might expose us to the humiliation of either trying to sustain or rescue them at an impossible distance from our frontier - or of leaving them in the lurch when they fail - as in all probability they must." It was possible, of course, that the Turcomans "might succeed in beating off the Russians unaided" by any regular British force; but it was necessary to "contemplate the opposite alternative: and in that case we could hardly escape war

under peculiarly difficult conditions...for if you interfered you must interfere with your whole strength," a course of action open to all the criticisms and limitations of the casus belli.

These objections, the gist of which was telegraphed to Lytton on 1 June, were certainly overwhelming and were thought to be decisive: yet it is difficult to see, granted the conditions of the problem, what alternative form the Viceroy's plan could have taken. The immediate problem, as he well recognised, was one of time and power rather than technique. In Lytton's agitated view, insurrectionary warfare was the only weapon at hand, and with Salisbury's prompt rejection - the details of which did not reach him until 21 June - he began to look around for a method which would turn it into a valid instrument of major strategy.

This was conveniently presented by Turkish attempts actively to associate the British Government with plans for creating "a kind of Mohamedan league or confederation of States in defence of Islam and against Russia" which would take the form of a general rising throughout Central Asia in the same way that a coherent and effective partisan movement was expected to develop in the Caucasus. The British Ambassador in Constantinople had already reported some of the early indications of this aspect of Turkish military policy; that a large number of Indians from Central Asia had gathered in Constantinople to plan such a rising, and that envoys from Kashgar, Afghanistan and Turkestan had been urged to return to raise their respective populations against Russia. On 4 May, Layard had written privately to

Derby that "if the war lasts, and the Porte finds itself in extreme peril I think it very likely that attempts will be made to raise the Mussulman populations under Russian rule, and if they do rise the contagion may spread beyond the Russian borders;"[49] and in a despatch five days later, on 9 May,[50] had reported that the Kashgar Envoy (who was about to leave for London) had been impressed by the Sultan with the importance of uniting all the Asiatic Mohammedan states "to prevent the ambitious designs of Russia in Turkey and Central Asia" and of their looking to England for help and advice. As in the case of the Caucasian risings, during the earliest days of the war, Layard did not expect these shadowy calls to the faithful, however genuine and sincere, to have much influence upon the hard facts of Russian military policy and strategy unless the movement became sufficiently widespread and was supported by or could be developed into a regular if auxiliary military campaign. Nevertheless, although principally as a means of improving the British image - and thereby increasing its influence - at Constantinople, he did encourage the Government to take seriously the "state of affairs in Central Asia," the possibility of such a rising taking place and the probable resultant effects upon Moslem feeling in India. This initially tepid encouragement was rapidly to grow into an urgent advocacy and active support as it became increasingly and distressingly plain during the course of May, on the evidence of Kemball's

49. Layard to Derby, pte, 4 May 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Layard,' Derby Papers.

50. Same to same, no.426, confdl, 9 May 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39144.

despatches, that the Turkish forces and defensive dispositions were incapable of halting, or even controlling, the rapid progress of the Russian armies towards the conquest of the whole of Armenia; and Layard therefore was prepared to promote any aspect of Turkish strategic policy which "might not only strengthen the Sultan but also stiffen Central Asian resistance to Russia."

In particular did this concern the Sultan's hope and intention of "detaching Afghanistan from Russia, and making use of that Country" as the keystone of his projected league of Moslem states. The choice of Afghanistan was strategically supportable on several grounds. In religious terms, it could be considered the strongest Moslem buffer state in Central Asia; and there was reason to believe that an appeal in these terms - short of proclaiming a jehad - would meet with an infectious response: Afghanistan would carry the green standard of the Prophet. Moreover, it was well placed geographically to act as a central base of operations from which the whole insurrectionary movement could be focussed and controlled. Militarily, economically and socially, it provided the best available foundation around which such an indigenous warfare could be effectively built. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, the attitude of Afghanistan being intimately linked to the question of Indian defence, Turkish attempts or even hopes to make Afghanistan the spear-head of a general rising against Russia would automatically tend to involve British interests and possibly even lead to active British support and assistance. In early June the Sultan had confessed to Layard that an estrangement between England and Afghanistan would ultimately lead to a prepond-

erance of Russian influence in the latter state; and that the cause of Islam in Central Asia would thereby be rendered hopeless. He was determined therefore to keep Afghanistan "out of Russian hands" (a matter of concern to both Britain and Turkey) by issuing through the Sheikh-el-Islam "a kind of excommunication against all Mussulmans who shall aid or abet Shere Ali in his policy against England and in favour of Russia."[51]

Nevertheless, even this small act, as indeed the whole idea of employing Afghanistan as a gigantic cat's-paw in Central Asia was subject to several limitations. It was already known that Afghanistan was under Russian influence, although it was not known to what degree. Nor was it known how far that influence could be counteracted through a religious appeal or threats of excommunication. Still less was it certain, especially after the Amir's rejection of Lytton's proposals at the Peshawur Conference for a defensive and offensive treaty, how far Afghanistan would be prepared to cooperate with Turkey and Britain, nor was it yet clear whether Britain, in view of her expressed neutrality, would be willing to sanction or afford unofficial assistance; even though both these factors - i.e. British assistance and Afghan acquiescence - were admitted to be necessary conditions for the success of an insurrectionary movement. These doubts could only be resolved by sending an official Turkish mission to Afghanistan and by enquiring how far the British Government would identify itself with the mission and any subsequent

51. Unpublished memoirs, vol.5, ff.42-5, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.38935; Layard to Derby, no.590, secret, 9 June 1877, PRO/FO 78/2573.

attempts to raise the populations in Central Asia.

On 8 June, Layard telegraphed to both the Foreign Office and Lord Lytton enquiring whether the Government would have any objection to a Turkish mission being sent to Afghanistan, and the establishment of a Turkish consul at Peshawur.[52] This official enquiry was expressly couched in vague language, the object of the mission and consulate being simply described as the promotion of British interests and the counter-action of Russian influence. But in his letters and despatches to Whitehall and Simla over the following weeks, Layard gave a more complete expression of what he hoped the mission would achieve and what he feared might be the consequences to India if it were refused. In particular, he emphasised to the Viceroy (what was only too clearly recognised) the dangers to India inherent in the Russian campaign in Armenia and the positive, perhaps decisive, advantages to Indian defence of any general rising resulting from the contemplated overtures to Afghanistan. "I think," he wrote on 13 June, "that I could get the Sultan...to do anything you might wish with regard to the Mahommedan States and populations of Central Asia:"[53]

> Yakoub Khan (the Kashgar Envoy) and others connected with Central Asia seem to think that there would be no difficulty in getting up a general rising against Russia if England were to encourage and identify herself with it. But the Mohommedan Princes and people now under Russian rule and influence would hesitate to answer an unsupported appeal made to them by Turkey. I am quite in the dark as to what

52. Layard to Derby, no.147, tlgm, secret, 8 June 1877; Layard to Lytton, cypher tlgm, 8 June 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39144 and 39164; PRO/FO 78/2573.

53. Layard to Lytton, 14 June 1877, ibid, BM.Add.MSS.38971.

the policy of H.M.G. may be as regards C.A.; but it is time that we should make up our minds as to the course we are to pursue. To invite Mussulman states to rise against Russia and then to abandon them to her vengeance would be impolitic and cruel. On the other hand, we must not conceal from ourselves that if Russia succeeds in carrying our her designs at the end of the war with Turkey our Imperial interests would be most seriously compromised. I am convinced that if she annexes Armenia our Indian Empire will be exposed to the most serious peril. The north of Persia must follow and if Russia further succeeds in opening the Bosphorus and Dardanelles to her fleet our roads to India are at her mercy, whether by Suez, Mesopotamia or Herat.

Layard's correspondence to Derby, both private and official, dwelt less on the military or strategic aspects of the mission, but stressed instead the perilous effects a refusal might have upon Moslem feeling in India. "The efforts that the Turks are making to move the Mahommedan world against Russia and in support of Islam" were not, he thought, "to be passed over lightly." "It must always be the policy of Turkey," he continued, "to keep the states of Central Asia hostile against Russia, and consequently, unless this policy became one of utter despair, friendly to England." Moreover, he had "little doubt that if England wished at this moment to check the ambitious and aggressive policy of Russia she would find in Turkey a valuable ally," for the influence of the Sultan as the successor to the Caliph was "still very great amongst the Mussulmans of Central Asia and of India." In a confidential despatch of 11 July he alluded to the fact that the Porte was also "attempting to combine a plan to bring about a rising in India, in the hope that England, in view of the danger, might be induced to take part in the war for the defence of Turkey against Russia;" and that, should the mission be refused at such a critical

stage of the war, the desperate Moslem world might well "turn upon England as the principal cause of the danger that threatens it." It was necessary therefore to support the mission openly to prevent any subsequent politico-religious movement being driven underground where it could no longer be observed and controlled. Thus, although Layard remained doubtful about the prospects of a league of Moslem states as a major military instrument, he was prepared to support it; firstly, because it was a weapon which, at this critical stage of events, and however ineffectual it might prove to be, neither Turkey nor Britain could afford to disregard; and secondly, because to refuse support would probably turn the movement into a dangerously uncontrollable clandestine conspiracy, and would almost certainly have detrimental effects upon Moslem feeling in India.[54]

Lytton's response, as could be expected, was prompt and vigorous. Indeed, Layard's telegram had crossed a letter written by the Viceroy five days earlier (4 June) suggesting that previous envoys sent to Cabul and Bokhara to raise the populations had carried no weight because they had possessed insufficient rank or had been taken for British spies. He had advised that if the Sultan really wanted to secure the active cooperation of Afghanistan against Russia, he ought "to lose no time in sending to Cabul a Mission of some consequence with a man of greater mark at the head of it." In that case, the Amir would hardly be in a position to dispute its validity, or to disregard orders from Constantinople;

54. Layard to Derby, 13 June 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Layard,' Derby Papers; no.597, confdl, 11 June 1877, PRO/FO 78/2573.

and the Viceroy would undertake to give such a mission unimpeded passage through India.[55] In his telegraphic reply on 10 June,[56] Lytton repeated this information at the same time strongly implying that the idea of an uprising against Russia would be welcomed by the Afghan chiefs, subjects and neighbours who "universally" distrusted the Amir because of his "hostile attitude to us, and unpatriotic intrigues with Russia." On the same day, the Viceroy telegraphed the substance of Layard's proposals to the British Commissioner at Peshawur, Captain (later Sir) Louis Cavagnari, as well as to Lord Salisbury, seeking their opinions, and placing before the latter a full statement of his own views:[57]

> My own opinion is, that proposed mission would be highly favourable to Indian interests in Afghanistan, and our whole frontier position. We need not, and of course could not, abet provocation of Afghan hostilities against Russia; but I don't think we are bound to prevent it to serious detriment of our own interests. Practically improbable that Amir's troops could get into actual contact with Russian outposts; whilst, on the other hand, Russian attack on Afghanistan would be immediately destructive of Russia's whole military position in Central Asia. Therefore not probable. But, if Amir is not murdered within next 6 months, he will be obliged to employ large army he has collected for holy war. Better it should be directed against Russia than against us. Our position is critical on Afghan frontier. Nothing short of deposition of Amir, or strong appeal to him by Sultan, can prevent completion of understanding between Amir and Russian authorities, which is pregnant

55. Lytton to Layard, 4 June 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.38969.

56. Same to same, cypher tlgm, 10 June 1877, ibid, BM.Add.MSS.39164.

57. Lytton to Salisbury, cypher tlgm, 10 June 1877; same to Cavagnari, cypher tlgm, 10 June 1877, ibid.

with imminent menace and long future trouble to India.

While conceding that the decision ultimately rested with the Home Government, Lytton pointed out that "prohibition of proposed mission would be most unfriendly act to Sultan" and would be "deeply resented" by "our Mohammedan subjects." It might be necessary therefore to tell the Sultan "unofficially that he must not communicate to us object of mission beyond assurance that it is not unfriendly to us, in which case passage of his Envoy through India will, as a matter of course, be unimpeded...." It will be noted that the Viceroy carefully avoided the contentious strategic issues which had arisen over his own earlier proposals, and even suggested that it was the Afghan rather than the Russian armies that were his principal and immediate cause of concern. Indeed, in a second 'personal and secret' telegram of the same date, Lytton emphasised that the object of the mission, as intimated by Layard, was not "to incite Amir to act against Russia, but only...to promote better relations between us and Cabul Government." But this was hyperbole. It could be seen that with Russia's imminent advance to Merv and her growing influence at Cabul, the Afghan armies, impressed and encouraged as they undoubtedly would be by the prestige of a victorious power and materially supported by Russian arms, equipment, organisation, leadership - and possibly a stiffening of troops, constituted that formidable spearhead of insurrection which Lytton so much dreaded and was at pains to turn against Russia. A deliberate Afghan war - which in the circumstances was unthinkable - or the Turkish mission seemed the only available means of bringing about this metamorphosis of military power in Central Asia.

Cavagnari, however, was much less sanguine about its prospects. Replying to Lytton on 11 June,[58] the Commissioner at Peshawur thought that "if England were actively assisting Turkey against Russia and...it was necessary to push a British force through Afghanistan to the Russo-Turkish border" the presence of a properly accredited Turkish envoy at Cabul might facilitate its passage; but that under present circumstances, unless the Sultan could convince the Amir that the mission was undertaken independent of British promptings, any good result appeared "somewhat questionable." Nor did he believe that a Turkish consul at Peshawur would be able to stimulate Moslem feeling among the border tribes and direct it against Russia. He feared that the Porte had an exaggerated idea of the influence of the Sultan in Central Asia and that "real influence in these parts is principally acquired either by fear of strength or the hope of gain, or a judicious combination of both...the mere pressure of religion, unaided by either of the above incentives, is unlikely to produce any marked success." He felt that religious influence, as a political or military weapon, was a "powerful engine for mischief" but "seldom so for good;" that it could "materially strengthen a party having a fairly strong position of its own" and could "often turn the balance where factions are pretty equally divided." But it was clear that none of these conditions favourably applied to the British military position in Asia, and Cavagnari, while obviously hesitant to discourage the mission outright, felt that it would be insufficient to counteract Russian influence at Cabul or to achieve its wider ends.

58. Cavagnari to Lytton, 11 June 1877, ibid.

Lord Salisbury's reaction to the idea of a Turkish mission could well be imagined in view of his earlier attitude to Lytton's own proposals for irregular warfare. Immediately upon receipt of the Viceroy's telegram on 11 June he wrote to Derby and the Prime Minister arguing at length that the proposals "clearly would be inadmissable" and would be "only practicable on the assumption that we are on the brink of war with Russia:"[59]

If I understand Lytton's policy aright, he wants to plunge Afghanistan into war in order to turn the edge of the sword from us. This is quite a new policy of which till now I have never had a hint. It might be safe, if we were content to let the Amir be defeated, and his kingdom partitioned. But this is an entirely new view of Indian politics. If we are not content to let him go, we are exposing ourselves, for a very inadequate object, to the risk of having to undertake costly and difficult operations. To rescue Balkh, for instance, which is to the north of the Hindu Kush, from Bokhara, would tax our resources to the utmost. I do not see what we can get by giving this permission. The wound to Russia, even if all the operations are successful, will not alter the events of the present war: and the Afghans are quite incapable of conducting protracted operations away from their base. But if the Afghans are beaten - which is quite probable - the fire will be lit on our own frontier - we may be in a position in Europe in which it may be impossible - or most inconvenient - for us to take any active steps and we shall have to remain quiet possibly to the great detriment of our credit. War with Russia along the whole line is an intelligible policy, though I do not think circumstances justify it now. But peace negociations in Europe, simultaneous with 'unofficial' war on the Attreck or the Oxus, can produce nothing but embarrassment or discredit. India, for better or worse, must be content to take English foreign policy of the moment and work upon it.

59. Salisbury to Beaconsfield, confdl, 11 June 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ce/281; same to Lytton, 15 June 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/2.

These objections were substantially those conveyed by letter to Lytton on 1 June but which were not due to reach Simla until the 21st.[60] Derby agreed; and two days later, on 13 June, the Prime Minister summoned Salisbury to discuss the "critical" state of affairs which Lytton's telegram seemed to imply, at the same time showing him a letter from Butler-Johnstone which appeared to corroborate Salisbury's "belief that an Affghan War against Russia was the object of the Mission" and that the consul at Peshawur was "likely to become a centre of intrigue as well as to furnish an undesirable precedent for other similar applications."[61] The result was that the following day Salisbury officially communicated all these objections to the Foreign Office assuming that instructions discouraging the mission would be promptly telegraphed to Layard.[62] He otherwise contented himself with adding a post-script to a private letter to Lytton expressing "a good deal of hesitation" at the objects of the proposed mission and suggesting that they were hardly justified in the circumstances.[63] In the event, however, the Foreign Office, which had not yet received Layard's despatches explaining in detail the provocative objects of the mission and was therefore understandably less moved by the urgency of the situation, neglected to inform Layard of the

60. Salisbury to Lytton, 1 June 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/2.

61. Same to same, 29 June 1877, ibid; Beaconsfield to Salisbury, confdl, 13 June 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Disraeli,' Salisbury Papers.

62. Salisbury to Lytton, pte, 29 June 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/2.

63. Same to same, pte, 15 June 1877, ibid.

decision reached as promptly as Salisbury had expected and desired. Over the next ten days, assuming silence to mean acquiescence, Layard pushed ahead arrangements with the Porte and the Viceroy for the mission's departure and reception in India. On 19 June he described to Lytton by telegraph[64] the advanced stage of preparation reached and forwarded a copy to London. Lytton in reply, making no mention of Cavagnari's objections, urged that the mission start as soon as possible and travel rapidly:[65] at the same time, he telegraphed to Salisbury that the mission intended to start "immediately" and that his Council were "unanimously of opinion that effect of mission may be favourable to our interests." "It is important to detach Mohammedan sympathy from Amir in his present attitude," he continued, "and we, therefore, look to value of mission more as affecting Mohammedan feeling than the Amir personally. Further tolerance of Russian influence and intrigue at Cabul very dangerous: the mission may help to stop it."[66] These telegrams from Simla and the Golden Horn, coinciding with the arrival in London of both Lytton's and Layard's earlier letters and despatches, provided for the first time a detailed account of the provocative nature of the mission, its aspects of coercion and deliberate entanglement, and the ambitious hopes entertained by the Ambassador and Viceroy. Their multiplicate effect was immediate and profound.

64. Layard to Lytton, cypher tlgm, secret, 19 June 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39164; Layard to Derby, no.178, tlgm, secret, 19 June 1877, ibid, BM.Add.MSS.39144; Layard to Derby, no.634, secret, 19 June 1877, PRO/FO 78/2574.

65. Lytton to Layard, cypher tlgm, 19 June 1877, ibid.

66. Lytton to Salisbury, cypher tlgm, 19 June 1877, ibid.

There can be no doubt that Salisbury was deeply alarmed by what he was convinced was a deliberate attempt to force his hand; and his first impulse and action was expressly to forbid the mission. Not unnaturally, the impression gained by linking the more extreme statements of Lytton's letters and telegrams was of a gigantic plot to provoke an insurrectionary movement at any cost. "There is a most dreadful mess about the Affghan mission," wrote Tenterden in reproach. "Direct telegraphing between Embassies is bad enough, but Allah knows what will happen if our foreign policy is directed from India instead of the more temperate climate of London."[67] "If this is allowed to go on," Salisbury warned Derby,[68] "the results will be most unfortunate and may be disastrous. Lytton is burning with anxiety to distinguish himself in a great war and if you allow him to direct Layard's movements, I warn you that serious danger will be the result." It was imperative that considerations of European diplomacy should shape the ends and nature of Indian military policy rather than that the reverse should be allowed; and before Parliament on 15 June in answer to charges by Argyll, Lawrence and Northbrook that it was "entirely wrong and quite unconstitutional"[69] to conduct Indian policy by means of private letters, Salisbury delivered "a very garbled version of the whole business" amounting to

67. Salisbury to Lytton, cypher tlgm, secret and personal, 21 June 1877, ibid; Derby to Layard, dft, no.211, 20 June 1877; no.214, 23 June 1877, PRO/FO 78/2560; Tenterden to Layard, pte, 21 June 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39136.

68. Salisbury to Derby, confdl, 21 June 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Salisbury,' Derby Papers.

69. Hansard, CXXXIV, 3rd Series, 15 June 1877, cc.1829-33.

a massive denunciation of Lytton's aggressive ideas. Ironically, there was a final development which made Salisbury's objections and Parliamentary denunciation appear to be decisive. By late June and early July, he could point with some justificatory satisfaction to the same Russian inability to exploit success that had puzzled Kemball as evidence of her incorrigible military weakness. Indeed by 21 June the already static nature of the Russian front around Kars foreshadowed the withdrawal that shortly followed from Armenia and Kizil Arvat, and seemed to vindicate Salisbury's view that the Russians were "not such terrible fellows after all." "The campaign in Armenia appears to have been a singular tissue of blunders," he wrote, "which are referable chiefly to an ingrained incapacity for closely organised action.... India may lay aside her terror for the present." Thus he could argue, especially after Plevna, that even if irregular warfare on Lytton's terms was not unwise or impracticable, by August it was at least superfluous and no longer necessary.[70]

That this argument was unanswerable became evident in the subsequent history and fate of the Turkish mission, revived on an innocuous footing after a vigorous protest from Lytton pointing out that a refusal "would infallibly be regarded by the whole Mahommedan community including our Mahommedan soldiers as a hostile act to Turkey, dictated by fear of Russia," and that, if persisted in, would "imperil the peace of the country, if not the safety of the Empire" for which he could not hold himself responsible. The very slowness of the Turks in setting the mission on foot (it did

70. Salisbury to Lytton, pte, 22 and 29 June; 6,13,20 and 25 July; 3,10 and 14 August 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/2.

not leave Constantinople until 12 July or arrive in Cabul until 8 September) suggested that Turkish victories in Asia Minor and Bulgaria had diminished the urgency if not the need of a Central Asian rising; and the Amir's own reception and ultimate discouragement of the mission seemed conditioned by the view that his help, in addition to being ineffectual at such distances from the decisive theatres of war in Turkey, would no longer be necessary. His caution supported the contention of those such as Cavagnari and Roberts who believed that the religious influence of the Sultan-Caliph was ineffectual as a corrosive antidote to the hard facts of Russian intrigue in Central Asia and was inadequate as a coagulant or stimulus for aggressive military purposes. Without Afghan cooperation, the idea of a league of Moslem states necessarily remained visionary. Even before the tide of war had turned in Asia Minor, in the circumstances, it was inconceivable that the Amir should consider acting as the keystone of an insurrectionary movement against Russia, towards whom his policy was being increasingly orientated, and against whom there would be every possibility of incurring certain defeat and no probability of receiving assistance from a country whose long-standing perfidious antagonism had been recently manifested in the occupation of Quetta and the collection of a punitive force along the North-West Frontier below the passes dominating the roads to Cabul. Thus the two fundamental preconditions of the successful conduct of a general rising - popular, that is principally Afghan, support and British command and control - proved unattainable because from both the British and Afghan angles of view, they seemed

irreconcilable.[71]

The episode of the mission to Afghanistan as the central strategic episode of the twilight war had ominous and far-reaching consequences for India. It had exposed fundamental differences in principle concerning the nature of Indian military policy and established the primacy of European diplomatic over local strategic or logistic considerations in its shaping and development. Hereafter, Salisbury never entirely recovered from his conviction that Lytton relied too exclusively upon professional military advice; that he saw all Indian problems as essentially strategic problems; that he foreshortened "the vista of the future" and crowded up "into the next few years or less, events which will take a generation to complete;" and that his policies if allowed would infallibly commit the country to war or humiliation. Indeed, these predilections continued to grow and followed him into the Foreign Office. Lord Lytton, on the other hand, believing that the only acceptable means of containing and eliminating Russian intrigue on the borders of India had been publicly disavowed and made impossible by the failure of the Turkish mission, began to develop plans which would secure the defence of India by more conventional means. Nevertheless, the question of the most efficacious method of defending the North-West Frontier remained, as ever, open and susceptible to the continuing ambiguity of the Afghan position and Salisbury's failure to provide, or concede the necessity for, any

71. Lytton to Salisbury, cypher tlgm, 23 June 1877, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39164; Salisbury to Lytton, cypher tlgm, 24 June 1877, ibid; Lytton to Layard, 18 November 1877, ibid, BM.Add.MSS.38969.

consistent defensive policy. From this point onwards there was no rapport between the Indian Government and the India Office; and the direct consequence, as will be seen later, was the second Afghan War.

"Greatly embarrassed," "sore and angry" at Salisbury's private and public repudiation of a policy, never rescinded, which he had been expressly sent out to articulate and implement, Lytton retorted with a series of eloquently, lengthily and impeccably argued letters, most of which were framed by Colley, culminating in the celebrated Merv despatch of 2 July in which he examined in great detail the fallacies behind Salisbury's reasoning on Indian defence problems, pointing out in no uncertain terms the frustrations imposed upon the Indian Government by the vacillations and timidity of the Secretary of State, the necessity of keeping Herat and Cabul out of Russian hands, and the consequences to India that would follow if this were not done. In the Merv despatch, he made three principal recommendations; firstly, that British influence be established in Persia by offering adequate support in opposing further Russian encroachments towards Merv; secondly, that British officers be sent immediately to Merv with authority to assist the Turcomans; and finally, "that we should be prepared to take such political and military measures as the course of events may render necessary to prevent Russia from obtaining a footing or even a dominant moral influence in Afghanistan."[72] "This is by

72. Lytton to Stephen, 24 June 1877; Lytton to Salisbury, 16 and 29 July 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/2; Burne to Pelly, pte, 30 July and 28 November 1877, loose papers, Pelly Papers.

far the most important despatch which has emanated from the Government of India since I assumed charge of it," Lytton wrote to Sir James Stephen, "I greatly fear it may be the beginning of a serious conflict between the two Governments on a question of vital importance to India, at a moment when, of all others, they ought to be firmly united."[73] This despatch, Lytton told Salisbury, had been "most deliberately and anxiously considered in several special councils. I have endeavoured to confine its proposals within the bounds of what seems to me still practical, under the terribly disadvantageous conditions of the situation in which we are placed. Some of my colleagues have advocated proposals going much further than those to which I have assented; but though one or two of the Members of my Council wished to make the despatch stronger than it is, none of them would have consented to its being weaker; and it must be regarded as the deliberate utterance of a thoroughly unanimous Government. I venture to think that it deserves, and I earnestly hope that it will receive, the immediate, and most serious, consideration of your Cabinet."[74]

In the event, Salisbury offered several explanations for his lack of public support, but no reason whatever for his change of policy. In the first place, he claimed that any scheme, Indian or British, suggestive of involvement in an Afghan war was bound to be bitterly opposed by those - and there were many - who could only remember the disastrous

73. Lytton to Stephen, pte, 2 July 1877, ibid; G.of I. to S.of S., no.21, secret, 2 July 1877, PSLFI, vol.954.

74. Lytton to Salisbury, pte, 2 July 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/2.

consequences of a previous Afghan war thirty-five years earlier. "There is a large school of writers and speakers here," he wrote, "retired Indian authorities of one sort and another who in their youth have seen the Affghan Ghost and have never lost the impression. Every move we make upon the frontier raises the cry that we are renewing Lord Auckland's policy. In Parliament, in the Press, in this Office, in the Cabinet the influence of this terror is met." Sedatives therefore were "absolutely necessary" if a more "temperate" policy of "defence not defiance" was to be carried through. Secondly, Russia's military and financial weaknesses had been so manifestly displayed in and aggravated by the Asiatic campaign that they were likely "to bring about at an early date a political revolution which must paralyse her offensive power for an indefinite period" and anyhow "cripple her during our time." Finally, the present state of negociations with Austria and Russia made war "not at all a probable contingency." Austria had "stated her determination not to permit Russia to acquire territory South of Adrianople - or to set up a Principality under Russian influence - or to stay in Constantinople: and to make any refusal on these points on the part of Russia a casus belli." At the same time, Russia had assured us "that they do not intend to retain Constantinople." "On this state of facts," Salisbury concluded, "we have come to the resolution, that the necessity for military action on our part will not arise...."

These arguments acquired greater force when it became clear after 30 July that the siege of Plevna was beginning to absorb the greater part of Russia's war effort,

thereby crippling her capacity for immediate offensive action elsewhere. In the Russian's "present forlorn condition," wrote Salisbury, "any policy based on an apprehension of their power will not make much way, or acquire many advocates here. Of course matters may later on change: and the war feeling may arise. But at present I never saw the English people look so peaceful - even those who are known in their hearts to wish for war, find it necessary to preface every argument with an expression of their devotion to neutrality.... The complete breakdown of Russia as a Great Military Power has entirely indisposed the English mind to believe in India being exposed to any sort of military danger...."[75]

This attitude was reflected in the reception of the Merv despatch whose arrival in London ironically coincided with the news of Plevna; for, although several Ministers had received private copies, not until 9 August was it formally considered by the Foreign Office and not until 13 August was it brought before the Cabinet. A lengthy memorandum by Lord Tenterden for Derby is the fullest available treatment we have of Foreign Office views.[76] "This despatch appears to me to be of a very unsatisfactory character," he wrote, "it seems to be prompted by a desire to urge H.M.G. to a 'vigorous' policy, without having due regard to the means by which that policy is proposed to be pursued, its consequences and public feeling in England. It accordingly puts the case in the strongest possible manner:"

75. Salisbury to Lytton, pte, 3,10 and 14 August 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/2.

76. Tenterden to Derby, 9 August 1877, bound vol., 'Letters of Lord Salisbury,' Derby Papers.

In considering this Despatch the first thing that strikes me is the extraordinary way in which the European situation is ignored. Yet it is obvious that the whole of our policy towards Russia must depend on it. A war with Russia undertaken to prevent an advance on Herat from a position 800 miles off would not be intelligible to public feeling in England. It would be looked upon as a mere pretext for defending Turkey. Moreover, with all deference to the opinions so vehemently urged by the writer of the Despatch, it must surely be very short-sighted to believe that British rule in India depends upon whether the Russians can be prevented, by intrigues with Turcomans or alliances with Persia, from advancing their outposts to the frontier of Afghanistan. If this were really so our hold on India would be slight indeed. For all experience tells us that there is nothing more certain than that the more civilised, wealthy, organised and numerous nation must inevitably absorb in time the weak, poor, disorganised, barbarous, ill-armed tribes on its flank. We have done this ourselves everywhere, Russia is doing it and the action is as sure as the action of the tide. Of course we should do what we can to gain time so as to be prepared for the inevitable contact but it is mere feebleness to raise the alarm of hopeless ruin at the imagination of it.

When it comes I doubt not that some means will be found for the protection of India from the Cossacks. I certainly cannot believe that Englishmen will quit the country in despair and I should think that, if the truth were known, the writers of the Despatch do not believe it either. I presume H.M.G. will not adopt the 'casus belli' plan. If this were done our policy of peace or war would be at the mercy of Turcomans, over whom we have no sort of control and of whom we have only the vaguest knowledge.

Tenterden then demolished each recommendation in turn: to assist the Turcomans would "provoke the retaliation of Russia;" a defensive and offensive alliance with Persia "would be to go to war with a pop-gun;" British officering and training of Persian troops would constitute "unofficial war." "It seems to me so wild a plan," he concluded, "I can scarcely imagine it seriously proposed."

The Cabinet, as could be expected, unanimously endorsed Tenterden's sentiments and concentrated their attention

on the potentially most dangerous of the Viceroy's proposals - the question of insurrectionary warfare. "We have no objection," reported Salisbury,[77] "to officers being sent into the Turcoman country to enquire about the real condition of the Turcomans - of Merv - and of the supplies which an invading force might expect to obtain on its march from Kizil Arvat to Merv. On the contrary, we think it very desirable that more information should be obtained on these points....At the same time any officers so sent must clearly be sent unofficially and as of their own accord:"

> But we draw a very strong line between officers sent to enquire and officers sent to instigate or guide any hostile action against Russia. To any 'unofficial' war in any form we have the strongest objection. Whenever we are at war with Russia, if war should come, we will strike at all points and hard as we can. Until we are at war, we will be no parties to encouraging others to fight her. Armed action, therefore, actual or vicarious, we repudiate.

The official proscription, significantly despatched after the routine period of three months, was no less forceful: "any military measures of precaution against the capture of Merv," it ran, "would be inopportune and might possibly be calamitous."[78] This secret despatch brought to a formal close the prolonged and at times acrimonious dialogue between Salisbury and Lytton. A reading of their correspondence still produces a sense of unbalance, of a lack of equipoise between the cogent and always admirably marshalled arguments advanced by the Viceroy and the less

77. Salisbury to Lytton, pte, 14 August 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/2.

78. S.of S. to G.of I., no.8, secret, 18 October 1877, Political and Secret Letters to India.

than masterly, sometimes slipshod, responses which they evoked from Whitehall; and to some extent this had become wittingly or unwittingly an irritant in their relationship. In any event, Lytton's attempts to reach a wider, more sympathetic audience - by forwarding copies of his private correspondence and despatches to those favourable critics both within and outside the Government, such as Sir James Stephen, Rawlinson, Wolseley, Napier, Layard and Beaconsfield, who commanded a certain authority and to some extent influenced the formulation of Indian military policy in England[79] - only further strengthened the impression of the India and Foreign Offices as to the Viceroy's dangerous mental instability. "When a man inherits insanity from one parent," Derby wrote to Salisbury, "and limitless conceit from the other, he has a ready made excuse for almost any extravagence he may commit." If Lytton's conduct was "not the result of partial madness, it is an intrigue. For what object....? Whatever the impulse which has led to this freak, the man is dangerous. You must watch him closely, pull him up unsparingly if he goes wrong, and if as a result he should resign, there will be no harm done."[80]

The Viceroy, on the other hand, believing the effect of Salisbury's repudiation was inevitably to make Russian influence "absolutely supreme and unassailable" in Afghanistan, continued to plan and prepare.[81] Already Cabul was "swarming

79. Lytton to Beaconsfield, Wolseley, Napier, Stephen, Layard and Rawlinson, 2 July 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/2.

80. Derby to Salisbury, pte, 9 October 1877, bound vol., 'Russia, dfts,' Derby Papers.

81. Lytton to Stephen, 24 June 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/2.

with Russian agents" urging the proclamation of a religious war and open hostilities against the Indian Government, condoning the violation of treaty engagements, furnishing money to buy up the allegiance of the independent chieftains, and otherwise encouraging the bribery, mutilation or roasting to death of all those suspected of relations with the Indian authorities.[82] In these circumstances, he warned his principal frontier agents, Sandeman and Cavagnari, to "continue to keep open means of independent action. Time being urgent on account of Russian movement...I think our only course will be to upset Amir, conclude direct relations with Mamund Chiefs and others, and separate Western Afghanistan from Cabul as semi-independent Khanate, including Herat, Candahar, Merv and Maimena under British protection."[83] In response to Lytton's private request that measures "be immediately commenced for placing an adequate military force in a position to take the field in Central Asia, or elsewhere, with complete efficiency and celerity of movement, six months hence at latest," both Haines and Roberts produced schemes for operations towards Quetta, Candahar and Herat.[84] The defences of Quetta were strengthened;[85] and Roberts primed for the Frontier Commissionership for which Wolseley had

82. Ibid.

83. Lytton to Sandeman and Cavagnari, personal and secret tlgm, 28 June 1877, ibid.

84. 'Memorandum on the Military Aspect of Affairs,' 30 June 1877, Sir F.Haines, ibid, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/9; private diary, 4-11 July 1877, Roberts Papers.

85. G.of I. to S.of S., no.50, secret, 21 December 1877; no.18, political, 18 January 1878, PSLFI.

previously been considered.[86] While these preparations were fully explained and justified to Beaconsfield and the prospective commanders-in-chief designate, Wolseley and Napier,[87] they were significantly compressed into a vague postscript for Salisbury[88] who nevertheless retorted with characteristic sensitiveness that "in the present excited state of the military mind, it is of the first importance not to leave the military men the chance of becoming practically the arbiters whether there shall be war or peace...."[89] Plevna, however, in bringing about a sudden alleviation in Eastern tension, removed the decision from their hands, at least for the time being: but it failed to remove the threat of intrigue through Afghanistan which remained the route of Indian apprehensions and the justification for their renewed diplomatic and military preparations in July 1878.

86. Private diary, 9 and 11 August 1877, Roberts Papers.

87. Lytton to Napier and Wolseley, pte, 2 July 1877, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/2.

88. Same to Salisbury, pte, 2 July 1877, ibid.

89. Salisbury to Lytton, pte, 3 August 1877, ibid, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/2.

CHAPTER V.

THE SECOND BALKAN CRISIS,

AUGUST 1877 - JULY 1878.

Plevna, as Beaconsfield explained to Queen Victoria,[1] while admittedly a "calamity" since it deprived the Turks of "the best of their armies and possibly the best of their generals," was no "disgrace" and did not in itself immediately render the Turkish cause hopeless. There were still 100,000 troops in the Quadrilateral, 30,000 at Shipka, 20,000 around Sophia and Araba-Konak, 15,000 at Constantinople and the broken armies of Armenia which Kemball and Mukhtar had recommended should be shipped to the decisive European theatre rather than remain garrisoning fortresses which might not be threatened for a six-month. Except for field artillery, the Turkish armies were well supplied with ammunition, small arms and provisions.[2] Although Fraser returned to England in early November, there seemed no reason to discount his reports subsequently given to the Duke of Cambridge, Tenterden, Simmons and Beaconsfield, that the defences of the Quadrilateral fortresses, of Adrianople, Constantinople and Bulair were now serious obstacles and that excepting a national panic and failure to adopt a flexible strategy in depth along the Balkan ridge with mobile field armies based on Adrianople and the Maritza Valley, they would delay perhaps for months the all important Russian

1. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 16 November 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/350.

2. Greene, op.cit., p.321.

advance to Adrianople, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.[3] Moreover, according to British and foreign military observers on the spot - Wellesley, Fraser, Chermside and Greene - as well as the influential and Turcophile Baker brothers (Maj.-General Sir Thomas Baker, A.D.C. and Assistant Military Secretary to the Duke of Cambridge; Maj.-General Sir Samuel Baker, explorer; and Maj.-General Valentine Baker, unofficial emissary of the Porte - all of whom Beaconsfield and Hardy privately interviewed after Plevna) the most prudent military strategy for the Russians to adopt over the winter (and in fact advocated by Todleben) especially in view of the severe climatic conditions, a supply line of communication severed by Danubian ice and mountain snowdrifts, the paucity of forage and provisions, and the relative immobility of cavalry and field artillery, would be to reduce the Quadrilateral fortresses and replenish and refit their armies for a fresh and decisive spring campaign.[4] Thus, although Layard from October onwards thickened his despatches with enclosures by Dickson, Chermside and Bluhm Pasha pointing to the deficiencies

3. Fraser to Simmons, 10,12,15,19,31 August 1877; 'Memorandum on the Bulair Lines;' 'Memorandum on the Defences of the North Bosphorus;' 'Memorandum on the Present State of the Armaments of the Turkish Batteries at the Dardanelles, 10 August 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/3; 'Report on the Turkish Defences at Bujuk-Checkmedji and Adrianople,' encl. in Layard to Derby, no.1055, 5 September 1877, PRO/FO 78/2585; 'Report on the Defences of the Bosphorus,' encl. in Layard to Derby, no.980, 22 August 1877, ibid.

4. Wellesley to Derby, no.648, 21 November 1877, PRO/FO 65/970; Chermside to Dickson, 21 August 1877, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.1018, 29 August 1877, PRO/FO 78/2584; Fraser to Simmons, 15 August 1877, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/3; Greene, op.cit., pp.323-5; Sumner, Russia and Balkans, p.340; Fraser, Recollections, pp.345-407.

in the armament, construction and layout of the vital fortifications of Adrianople, Constantinople and Bulair and the absence of any pre-arranged plan for falling back and manning them in case of further defeats in the field; although he warned that it was Russia's fixed determination, should there be a winter campaign, by turning Gallipoli - "the key to the Turkish Question" - and converting the Bosphorus into "a second Gibralter" and the Black Sea into a Russian lake, to dismember the Ottoman Empire, destroy British influence and establish "an exclusive preponderance in the East;" although he warned that the German ambassador, Prince Reuss, "as Russian as Ignatieff and almost as deadly and mischievous" was intriguing to bring about a seperate peace, and that "plots and schemes" were hatching in Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Rome and Athens "dangerous to the interests of England and the peace of the world;" although he pressed upon the Cabinet that "hesitation and caution were not the best help to diplomatic action in a great crisis," and that now was the "moment for an English Government to come forward by occupying Gallipoli to check the progress of Russia, to settle the 'Eastern Question,' and to re-establish our influence in Central Asia as well as in Turkey,"[5] Beaconsfield, partly mislead by the optimistic accounts of his confidential military emissaries, believed for almost a month that there were sufficiently reasonable grounds for expecting that peace

5. Layard to Derby, no.1282, 31 October 1877, PRO/FO 78/2590; no.1284, 1 November; no.1313, 7 November; no.1444, secret, 4 December 1877, PRO/FO 78/2593; no.1501, 19 December 1877, PRO/FO 78/2594; forwarding reports by Dickson, Kemball and Bluhm Pasha; Layard to Beaconsfield, secret, 31 October, 28 November, 12 December 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/L/129; Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130; Layard to Derby, 5 December 1877, ibid.

could be brought about by mediation provided the calling of an early Parliament and the preparation of a modest military force gave such attempts some solid backing. As late as 8 January, after the turning of the Shipka Pass, he reported to the Queen the outcome of a conversation with Sir Samuel Baker on "the question of the approach to Adrianople of the Russians." Baker had "particularly" maintained that the "alleged" turning of the Pass was a "great mistake; that if a snowstorm occur, which may be counted on, they will be destroyed." He had just heard from his brother, Baker Pasha, "who takes an encouraging view of the situation and says that the Turks have only to keep their heads cool. What is most dreaded are Stamboul panics. He persists, that the Russians have no transport; that their infantry are without shoes, and their cavalry without horses; that they are more anxious for an armistice than the Turks; and the only danger is that the Turks will grant them one. The Russians, he says, are playing the same game as under Diebitsch; bragging and making demonstrations, when they are on the verge of annihilation."[6]

Moreover, the obstructive opposition of Derby, Carnarvon and Salisbury to any form of military intervention at this time strengthened the arguments for attempted mediation. Immediately upon receiving news of the fall of Plevna on 10 December, Hardy had written to Beaconsfield emphasising its critical significance and suggesting that the time had arrived for proposed mediation which, if refused, should be followed

6. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 8 January 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/398; Baker to Beaconsfield, pte and confdl, 15 and 30 December 1877, 'Eastern Question Correspondence,' ibid, B/XVI/C/3 and 5.

by an early Parliament and an increase of force.[7] This policy was debated in four successive Cabinets on 14, 17, 18 and 19 December and those aspects of it involving Parliament and military preparations were suspected and roundly criticised by Carnarvon, Derby and Salisbury and to a lesser extent Northcote and Smith. The three lords strongly suspected, what was only partially true, that Beaconsfield, if he did not actually invite war, had "made up his mind to large military preparations, to an extremely warlike speech, to an agitation in favour of armed intervention...and if possible to an expedition that shall occupy Constantinople or Gallipoli;" he believed "thoroughly in 'prestige' - as all foreigners do; and would think it (quite sincerely) in the interests of the country to spend 200 millions in a war if the result of it was to make foreign states think more highly of us as a military power."

In Salisbury's opinion, such a policy was "dangerous" and bristled with difficulties. Hastily and urgently to call Parliament together involved not only explaining the special purposes to which supplementary estimates or votes of credit were to be put (which military exigencies might not allow) but using such supplies immediately (which might not be possible or desirable). "You must arm at once and send your contingent to Constantinople at the earliest possible date." The Turks would then abandon all idea of negociation and prepare for a desperate defence; while the Press would place "the most belligerent interpretation" upon

7. Hardy to Beaconsfield, 11 December 1877, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/B/973; private diary, 11 and 16 December 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

the summoning of Parliament. The result would be to implicate Britain in a second Crimean War "only postponed until our allies have been half destroyed" and for which there had been little justification and no previous military preparation. Russia had "not yet crossed the Balkans;" the roads were "still impassable to artillery, or nearly so;" there was "a long distance to traverse for commissariat;" winter's full ravages had barely set in; and finally Austria was pledged not to allow a Russian occupation of Constantinople. Constantinople was therefore "in no real danger." Moreover, there were "particular circumstances in our own case" that made a warlike policy "unsuitable." While Russia was "exhausted in the sense that she cannot go on fighting without great sacrifices," she was "not so exhausted as to be unable to make head against any great national danger - such as a war with England. Nor would the Turks be of any great value as allies. Enrolled as troops under our officers they would fight admirably; but such an arrangement on an extensive scale will never be permitted, so long as the Turkish Government retains a shadow of independence." The financial condition of the Indian Army rendered it less efficient than it would be in the future; while the hostile insolence of Afghanistan made it impossible to strike a rapid and effective blow at Russia in Central Asia without becoming embroiled in a subsidiary Afghan campaign. The reformed British army had "not had time to accumulate Reserves;" the industrial areas were "depressed and profoundly averse to war;" Austria had been temporarily "seduced from us;" and the national feeling though "strongly partial to the Turks" instinctively shrank from a war which would be "unpopular and unprofitable."

It was impossible therefore for the Cabinet to be too careful; and it would be necessary to ensure that nothing was done without full and prior Cabinet consultation, that the military preparations were kept within bounds and their purposes exactly specified, and finally that any concept of a veiled threat be eliminated as much as possible from the Queen's Speech. Northcote's compromise, suggested to avert a Cabinet rupture, was that "we should give up the idea of defending Constantinople but make all preparations for occupying Gallipoli the moment it is threatened" with a small force that could be rapidly built up should circumstances necessitate and Parliament prove friendly. "Russia would probably think twice before she attacked even a handful of British troops, so that the inadequacy of our force to resist her army in the first instance would be of less consequence."[8] Although this obstructionism obtained a reprieve in delaying Parliament (a delay which Salisbury believed would take "all the sting, or nearly all, out of the proposition"),[9] the arguments for mediation and a non-warlike policy had been subverted and much weakened by Russia's refusal (29 December) to accept mediation (insisting that

8. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 'Secret Memorandum of the Meeting of the Cabinet holden on December 14, 1877,' 14 December 1877; same to same, 17 December 1877; 'Memorandum of the Meeting of the Cabinet, Tuesday, December 18,' Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/360,365,369; Salisbury to Beaconsfield, 26 December 1877, ibid, XIX/B/996; Northcote to Beaconsfield, most confdl, 17 December 1877, ibid, B/XX/N/46; Carnarvon to Northcote, 15 December 1877, Iddesleigh Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50022; Salisbury to Northcote, 15 and 16 December 1877; Northcote to Salisbury, 18 December 1877, ibid, BM.Add.MSS.50018; private diary, 16,17 and 19 December 1877, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

9. Salisbury to Northcote, 16 December 1877, Iddesleigh Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50018.

the conditions of an armistice were a matter between the Porte and the Russian Commanders-in-Chief in Asia and Europe) and her failure to provide an assurance not to occupy temporarily Constantinople and the Dardanelles; they were finally swept away by the military events of January which dominated the diplomatic struggle and set its course for the next three months.

The rose-hued predictions of Beaconsfield's confidential military emissaries were startlingly upset. Far from adopting Todleben's cautious advice to go into winter quarters, Grand Duke Nicholas, supported by Gourko and Scoboleff, had even before the fall of Plevna (as reported by Wellesley on 21 November) determined to exploit the moral and strategic advantages afforded by its capture and immediately strike over the Balkans, in spite of the formidable difficulties inherent in a mid-winter mountain campaign, to Adrianople before the Turks could recuperate and regroup and before Britain could intervene. In these circumstances, any restriction upon the freedom of action of his Generals, and the armistice conditions they could demand, was unthinkable. While the Tsarevich and Todleben kept an iron hand upon Bulgaria, Gourko was to force the western passes, capture Sophia, link up with the Serbs and push on past Philippopolis to Adrianople; there, after forcing the central Balkans and turning Shipka, Radetzky and Scoboleff were to join him. This strategy was made all the easier by the Turkish dispositions for the defence of the Balkans, now entrusted to the ill-fated Suleiman Pasha; for instead of concentrating the whole of his available field force (about 150,000 troops) in the Maritza Valley, and using its interior

lines as Napoleon did in 1814 to defeat the invading columns - which were widely separated - in detail, falling back upon Adrianople as a last resort and converting it into a second Plevna, he scattered his armies in isolated detachments, 40,000 at Shipka, 25,000 at Araba-Konak and 15,000 at Sophia. The course of the ensuing campaign was breathlessly swift: on 4 January, Sophia was occupied; on 9 January, the Shipka was turned with the capitulation of 36,000 Turks and 93 guns; between 15 and 17 January, Suleiman's army of 50-60,000 men was shattered at Philippopolis and sent streaming in scattered disorganised bands through the Rhodope where ravaged by desertion, disease, cold and starvation it emerged on the Aegean a broken force, useless for military operations, to be trans-shipped by Manthorpe Bey, an ex-Royal Navy officer in the Turkish service, to assist in the local defence of Constantinople and Bulair; on 20 January, the Russian cavalry entered Adrianople without resistance; by the 29th, they had taken Lule Burgas, Chorlu, Enos and Rodosto. Within fifty-one days, the Russians had forced the snow-drifted, ice-bound Balkans, fought three series of battles resulting in the destruction of two Turkish armies and the capture of 213 guns, and marched over 400 miles to the gates of Constantinople where, on 31 January, they inflicted such terms of peace as to cripple Turkey as an independent military power.

The fall of Sophia and the turning of the Shipka constituted in Layard's opinion "probably the gravest crisis in Turkish history." The Sultan and his ministers had "lost their heads" and did "not know what to do;" the "greatest confusion" reigned at Constantinople where it was "absolutely

impossible" to do serious business with the Porte.[10] But the more important parts of Layard's despatches were the enclosures of his military attaches and consuls recording the kaleidoscopic breakdown of Turkish resistance and the imminent Russian seizure of the lines of Bujuk Checkmedji, Bulair, the forts on the western side of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. The most "frightful confusion" prevailed in and about Adrianople; all troop rail movements had been suspended to remove the thousands of fugitives and refugees to Constantinople; the Turkish military authorities had given up "in despair any attempt to restore order, or to take prompt decisive measures to meet the exigencies of the present terrible crisis." The Turkish armies, broken, demoralised and too dispersed for effective combinations could provide no prolonged resistance. Besides the raw and panic-stricken civic guard, no troops had been detailed to man the fortifications of Constantinople and Gallipoli. Fresh battalions which the Sultan intended personally to command were being drawn from Bulgaria and Batoum; but they might arrive too late.[11] What did Great Britain intend to do: to promise intervention while dispossessed of Gallipoli would encourage the Turks to fight on with a meaningless assurance (for intervention for the security of Constantinople was only possible in Layard's mind if Gallipoli were first

10. Layard to Beaconsfield, pte and secret, 9 January 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/L/137; Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS. 39130; Layard to Derby, 11 January 1878, bound vol., 'Letters from Layard,' Derby Papers.

11. Layard to Derby, no.9, 2 January 1878, PRO/FO 78/2775; no.18, 5 January ; no.30, 8 January; no.34, 9 January; no.72, 16 January 1878, PRO/FO 78/2776 and 2777 (forwarding despatches from Dickson, Kemball, Fife, Chermside and MacDougall); Fife, Armies of the Balkans, pp.144-61.

occupied); but to refuse would drive the Turks to negociate a separate and probably ruinous peace. For the next two months, the struggle over military policy within the Cabinet and the diplomatic struggle with Russia hinged upon the intricate and shifting military situation in and around Constantinople and the Straits. Strategically speaking, the control of Gallipoli was equally and supremely important to both Britain and Russia. Once in Russian hands, no British combined landing on the Aegean shore, or a naval demonstration at Constantinople was possible, and the final step of the Russian armies - the unhindered occupation of the Turkish capital - was assured; but in British hands, diversionary landings and naval support in the defence of Constantinople were possible, and the Russian military position, analagous to Rommel's last stand in the Western Desert, would be precarious in the extreme.

It was the rapidity rather than the fact of the Russian advance which surprised the Cabinet. The Queen's first reaction, prompted by Ponsonby who was skeptical of Baker's optimistic evidence upon which the Prime Minister appeared to rely and was at last beginning to doubt whether "the Ministers had a defined plan," was to write a memorandum "in bold and vigorous terms admitting of no misunderstanding" as to the seriousness of the crisis and Britain's duty as "a great European power...to determine at once what means should instantly be taken to prevent Constantinople from being attacked."[12] Armed with this memorandum at the

12. Ponsonby to Queen Victoria, 9 and 11 January 1878; 'Memorandum by Queen Victoria,' Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/400,407,408.

emergency Cabinet of 12 January, Beaconsfield proposed that Britain should send the Fleet to the Dardanelles and occupy the lines of Bulair; but serious objections were raised, by the Service Ministers as well as by Derby and Carnarvon, as to the wisdom and efficacy of each of these measures, and the Cabinet broke up agreeing only to Salisbury's evasive compromise to seek the Sultan's consent to "anchor in the Straits," and Russia's firm assurance that her armies would not occupy Gallipoli.[13] The question of despatching the Fleet to the Dardanelles was essentially a Cabinet dispute, eventually resulting in Carnarvon's resignation; that of occupying Bulair or an alternative position on the Asiatic side of the Dardanelles was a professional issue whose solution would in the end determine whether or not the Fleet could go to Constantinople secure in the knowledge that it would not be caught in the Marmara mouse-trap.

The more Carnarvon and Derby thought of the "Dardanelles business" the less they liked it. Carnarvon could not "conceive any possible use of such a move." "Our ships without troops landed," he wrote to Derby on 14 January,[14] "cannot keep the channel open; and if the Russians push on and occupy Gallipoli holding the land and the batteries above our ships (unless we destroy the batteries which is an act of war) what an unsafe and ridiculous position are we in." Such a move "must have an object and a meaning." If it was meant "as a step to something further," then there were

13. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 12 January 1878, ibid, B/XIX/C/410.

14. Carnarvon to Derby, pte, 14 January 1878, bound vol., 'Letters from Lord Carnarvon,' Derby Papers.

grounds for objection and perhaps resignation; if "as a demonstration only," it would "not deceive Russia," and would "make our future position still more difficult." Moreover, it was proposed "exactly at the worst possible moment" - when negociations were in progress. Should these negociations be brought to a rapid close, "the movement of the ships would be after the event," would "look like the result of a nervous anxiety to do 'something'," and would "make us look absurd:" should they prove protracted, the appearance of the Fleet would "encourage the Turks to hold out for higher terms" and we should have led them on "undesignedly to still greater difficulties."

Derby had "never been able to understand what the ships are to do when they get into the Dardanelles:"

> If the Russians do not go to Gallipoli, they are useless: if the Russians do go there, there is imminent risk of a collision. Their presence could not prevent an occupation of the coast by Russian troops, supposing that to be intended: on the contrary the presence of Russian troops on the seaboard would render their position precarious. Suppose such an occupation to take place, the ships being there, what could follow? Either we must bring them back - in which case the whole proceeding would be ridiculous - or if we left them there, their presence in face of a Russian army would only show the inutility of their having been sent. I fail to see what objects, diplomatic or parliamentary, are to be gained by sending them.[15]

The same day Beaconsfield received these objections, he called together his first full-scale military conference

15. Derby to Beaconsfield, 16 January 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/D/1295.

of the crisis to thrash out the question of Bulair vis-a-vis Chanak.[16] The meeting consisted of Beaconsfield, Smith, the Duke of Cambridge, Ellice, Simmons, Mends, with Hardy in the chair, and Fraser standing by with orders to blow up the batteries of the Dardanelles if Chanak were decided upon. Ellice, backed by the Duke of Cambridge, opened with Home's report recommending Chanak. Simmons followed with a review of the military situation, estimating that the Russian cavalry advance guard would reach Bulair on 24 January, and the main body of infantry on 11 February. He then produced a memorandum, hastily prepared by Fraser on the basis of his recent inspections, which appeared conclusively to show that if the Russians once occupied the Gallipoli Peninsula the passage of transports, if not iron-clads, through the Straits would become impracticable, and the occupation of Chanak therefore untenable. Fraser believed that the Russians could almost immediately amass eighty to ninety heavy position guns and 250 to 350 captured Krupp field guns along the European heights commanding the Straits and the Asiatic shore beyond in such a way that an intruding fleet would be exposed for ten and a half miles to gunfire at 4,000 yards and for four miles to gunfire at 3,000 yards. In order to return fire at 3,000 yards an elevation of ten to twelve degrees would be required by the ships' guns - and Fraser

16. For an account of the proceedings of this conference, see: 'Memorandum upon which I stated military position of affairs on 16 January at a meeting at the War Office,' J.L.A.Simmons; 'Summary of Heavy Rifled Armament at the Dardanelles;' 'Memorandum on Chanak,' Capt. T.Fraser, 16 January 1878, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4; Fraser, Recollections, pp.408-9; private diary, 16 January 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11; Commerell to Hornby, 19 February 1878, 'Letters - Naval Officers,' Hornby Papers, PHI/120a; Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 14 and 17 January 1878, Hughenden MSS, XIX/C/417,423.

doubted whether this could be achieved. Moreover, in terms of penetrability the odds weighed heavily against the Fleet. From the four major forts above the Narrows projected thirty-one guns ranging in calibre from six inches to ten point four inches, fifteen of which had powers of armour penetration at 1,000 yards of nine to twelve inches. But of the nine ships of Hornby's squadron, not one exceeded eleven inches of armour, and only four (the Alexandria, Temeraire, Sultan and Rupert) carried from nine to eleven inches. Finally, owing to rapid chances in direction and current of the channels, iron-clads could not provide a continuous screen. Operating under these conditions a fleet could neither pass nor provision a military force established at Chanak; it could neither prevent torpedo warfare, intercept a Russian crossing in force of the Straits, nor prevent a land attack upon Chanak from the Asiatic side. But none of these objections applied to Bulair. These views were strongly supported by Smith, the First Lord of the Admiralty, who had had the benefit of communication with Yelverton and the naval commanders on the spot, Hornby and Commerell. Commerell, for instance, felt that "the question of taking possession of the Asiatic side is to my mind the weakest possible policy both politically and strategically. We could neither hold the Asiatic side or the water way....If we get the Asiatic lines we could simply never hold them. The town of Chanak would be pounded and no water way open. Here at Bulair is the place to fight the battle of the Dardanelles - if it is not fought here it will be no where else."

Fraser has recorded that "the sense of the meeting ended rather against the Chanak proposal;"[17] but it was not

17. Fraser, Recollections, p.409.

conclusive. The Duke of Cambridge afterwards confided to Hardy that Simmons' proposal "however good in itself was extremely vague and many things were assumed about which far more certainty would be absolutely necessary before I would adopt or recommend them."[18] In spite of two further memoranda by Fraser and Simmons, he remained unconvinced.[19] At the same time, it seemed more than doubtful whether even Bulair could be defended in time; there was insufficient naval transport in the Eastern Mediterranean for a large force; the troops despatched to Malta the previous August were still ill-equipped; and the old dispute arose between Hardy, the Duke of Cambridge and Simmons as to whether any expedition should be launched from Malta or Gibralter "in a haphazard sort of war...that would merely lead to discredit and national disgrace" or "done deliberately and on a sound and safe basis" from England.[20] The conference convinced Hardy and Beaconsfield that "we should be too late if Russia really acted," that "we cannot make an immediate dash at Gallipoli, nor does there seem to be any other coup de main which we could attempt without serious embarrassment."[21]

18. Cambridge to Hardy, confdl, 16 January 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/273/5.

19. 'Memorandum on the Present Position of Affairs at the Seat of War in Bulgaria,' Simmons to Hardy, 19 January 1878; 'Memorandum on Chanak,' Capt. T.Fraser, 26 January 1878, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4; Fraser, Recollections, p.410.

20. Cambridge to Hardy, confdl, 16 January 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/273/5.

21. Private diary, 16 January 1878, ibid, T501/11; Northcote to Beaconsfield, pte, 18 January 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/N/53; Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 20 January 1878, ibid, XIX/C/429 and 431.

Beaconsfield explained to the Queen that the despatch of the Fleet to Besika Bay was now "impossible," that care must be continually exercised, even if the Sultan requested its presence at Constantinople, "as some raid of Gourko's may turn the Sea of Marmara into a mousetrap." To force the Straits, moreover, in defiance of the Porte would be in contravention of the Treaty of Paris which would free Russia from all moral obligations not to do the same. "Even if we successfully occupied Gallipoli ourselves," he wrote on 20 January, "it is understood that the presence of Yr. Majesty's fleet at Constantinople would exercise no paramount influence on events: that it could only bombard the city while it would itself be subjected to a ruinous fire from commanding positions."[22] Thus the Grand Vizier's reluctance, supported by Layard, to invite the Fleet to Constantinople for fear of inciting further panic, and Russia's assurance that she had no intention of directing military operations on Gallipoli provided Britain agreed to do the same and the Turks did not concentrate regular troops there, were scarcely of material importance; for had the situation been reversed the Cabinet would have felt powerless to comply with the former, or to prevent the latter. The immediate local defence of Constantinople and the Straits would have to be entrusted to the Turks alone until events removed the decision elsewhere.

The prospect of an independent Turkish defence was shattered the following day (21 January) by reports from Constantinople that the Russian bases of peace included a

22. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 20 January 1878, Hughenden MSS, XIX/C/431.

bilateral settlement of the question of the Straits by Russia and Turkey alone. Thereupon, on 23 January, although Northcote urged that the Fleet be sent only "to plant our flag" on Gallipoli before the Russians arrived, and without embroiling themselves in the war or any hostilities whatever "give them notice that we have done so,"[23] it was decided to send the Fleet to Constantinople even though it had been shown the week before that such a move would likely result in a Cabinet rupture, that the Fleet could do nothing at Constantinople, and that without first securing the Dardanelles (or destroying the batteries beforehand) the Fleet risked being trapped in the Sea of Marmara. Carnarvon at once resigned; Derby did likewise but then came back. For "like a bombshell" on 24 January fresh news arrived from Layard that the Russian conditions provided for a European not a Russo-Turkish settlement of the Straits. Immediately countermanding orders were sent to Hornby, who accordingly withdrew. But the next day, Layard confirmed that the Straits question was indeed reserved for bilateral treatment, at the same time forwarding news from Fife warning that Russia might send cavalry to seize the forts of the Dardanelles or landing parties across the Gulf of Xeros to take the lines of Bulair in rear.[24] Disturbed by "alarming accounts" of the effects that Derby's resignation would have on the electorate in Lancashire and Cheshire, pressed by his colleagues to prevent a Cabinet rupture, reminded of the hazards in forcing the Dardanelles,

23. Northcote to Beaconsfield, confdl, 15 and 23 January 1878, ibid, B/XX/N/50 and 59.

24. Layard to Derby, no.105, 23 January 1878, PRO/FO 78/2777.

Beaconsfield could not bring himself yet again to countermand Hornby's orders. "We trust that the Russians will not enter Constantimople," he wrote to the Queen, "but we have no means of preventing it. Yr. Majesty's fleet alone, were it double the strength, could not alone prevent it. It would require, in addition, an army of at least 60,000 English troops."[25]

The direct result of this incident was the Turkish signature of the armistice conditions. "How we gnashed our teeth," wrote Northcote afterwards, especially after Baker Pasha had revealed "that if our fleet had not turned back the first time the lines of Bujuk Checkmedji - the core of the military stipulations - would never have been abandoned and might have been held indefinitely."[26] "We are taunted with cowardice," exploded Layard to Hornby,[27] "and are a public laughing stock. The Russians are now completely masters of the situation. The Turks deserted by everyone have been obliged to accept all that has been demanded of them and this 'all' is the absolute ruin of the Turkish Empire and its conversion into a Russian Province."

The political bases of peace, whose acceptance was a prerequisite to the armistice, included the independence of Montengro, Roumania and Servia; the granting of autonomous administrations to Bosnia and Herzegovina; a large war indemnity and a "private understanding as to the Bosphorus

25. Northcote to Beaconsfield, most confdl, 25 and 26 January 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/N/62 and 63; Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 31 January 1878, ibid, XIX/C/452.

26. Hardy to Beaconsfield, 15 February 1878, ibid, B/XX/Ha/152.

27. Layard to Hornby, 25 January 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

and Dardanelles." The military stipulations called for the evacuation of the fortresses of Widdin, Rustchuk, Silistria, Belgradchik, Rasgrad, Bazardzkik and Erzeroum; the raising of the Black Sea blockade; and the Russian occupation of Burgas and Midia as revictualling bases. But of crucial importance was the provision calling for the Turks to retire from their last line of defence - the Bujuk Checkmedji ridge - which, although only partially fortified and armed by Bluhm Pasha (there were forty to fifty unmounted guns and 200 more required to complete) if flanked by Hobart's gunboats and manned by the 50,000 to 75,000 troops that had been drawn from various parts of the Empire, was capable of a prolonged and almost impregnable defence; while the Russians occupied the Chataldja line, a neutral zone about ten miles broad being left between the two armies. Similar demarcation lines were drawn in the Chersonese, bringing the Russians within easy striking distance of Bulair, and allowing of their prompt occupation of Rodosto. All these concessions were granted with a stroke of the pen: but their exact details - particularly those concerning the demarcation lines in front of Constantinople and Bulair - were not immediately known to the Porte or to London, and Russia's continued advance up to these lines, apparently in defiance of the armistice, produced a crisis of the first magnitude.

On 5 February, while ignorant of the precise details of the armistice, Layard reported to London that the Russians, in advancing as far as Chataldja (Scoboleff's outposts had been seen at Kabakeli and Ormanly, about eight miles from the

Bujuk Checkmedji line), and insisting that the Turks abandon those lines before signing the armistice, now had Constantinople at their mercy.[28] "They have succeeded in outwitting and out-manoevring us completely." "The conduct of the Russians," Layard telegraphed, "is inexplicable, and treachery is suspected." The effect of this telegram was swift and dramatic.

"Your telegrams announcing that the Russians had occupied Tchataldja arrived last night," wrote Currie on 7 February,[29] "there was a dinner at the Speaker's and several Cabinet Ministers were there. They received the telegram while at dinner and its contents soon oozed out. I went to Mr. Brand's dinner and to Co. Munster's Ball and the excitement was great. Everybody was convinced that the Russians were actually in Constantinople." Public feeling had "at last been roused. For some days the storm has been getting up and now Lord Beaconsfield will be able to do pretty well what he likes until the wind changes again.... We had a crowd of people cheering and shouting in the Courtyard of the Foreign Office today and Lord Beaconsfield is applauded wherever he goes." The funds fell by almost two per cent and the hitherto rising Russian stocks collapsed. Lord London offered to raise, clothe and equip an infantry regiment at his own expense in the event of war.[30] "Since

28. Layard to Derby, 8 February 1878, ibid; no.189, 6 February 1878, PRO/FO 78/2778.

29. Currie to Layard, 7 February 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50018.

30. Hardy to Beaconsfield, 15 February 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/122.

the Trent affair I have never known England so warlike," wrote Wolseley, "there is a most angry feeling abroad in the country and the Government have only to declare war to have the whole country with them; they know this and will declare war, if Russia makes a false move."[31] Sir Samuel Baker privately urged Beaconsfield to "act like a thunderclap before an alliance can be forced upon Turkey by Russia" by seizing the Turkish fleet "as a temporary precaution" (rather than permit it to fall into Russian hands) or offering to protect it in "Malta harbour until peace shall be definitely concluded." "If Turkey declines - repeat Copenhagen. There is no time to be lost in diplomatic delays which allow Russia to occupy all the strategic points of advantage." It was also "an absolute necessity" for us "as the great Maritime Power in time of war" to seize coaling stations at Port Said, Suez, Crete and Gallipoli to form "a direct and unbroken chain" between England and India.[32] Colonel Home was moved to write a bitter and gloomy memorandum "to examine the military state of the problem" pointing out that the Russian Government, by virtue of its commanding military position "grasps both the Dardanelles and Bosphorus as firmly as if the Russian flag were hoisted on the forts defending those straits;" that Turkey was "completely beaten down, perfectly defenceless;" that no "alteration of the existing situation in the East" could be expected from Russian moderation, generosity, fear of bankruptcy or internal revolution; that the imminent seizure of the Turkish fleet

31. Wolseley to R.Wolseley, 18 February 1878, WFP.

32. Baker to Beaconsfield, 14 and 15 February 1878, Hughenden MSS, XVI/C/17a and b.

and the dismissal of its English officers and engineers made British naval intervention impossible; that Austria was not fitted to cooperate in offensive warfare; that Britain's defences and military preparations suffered at the hands of "those who refuse the men and promise the money and those who postpone the expenditure until it is too late;" that Britain's only policy now was to wait and hope to exploit the political turbulence that would probably result from the impressment of Epirus, Thessaly and Macedonia into a Bulgarian 'slav' state.[33] "Matters in the East are in a most fearful state," wrote the Duke of Cambridge, "and we look in a most deplorable position!!!! Sad sad indeed and it bears me down with grief and sorrow for my dear country."[34] The Queen, a compulsive correspondent on most occasions, exceeded herself in three letters in a single day in denunciations of "Russia's false hypocritical intrigues and proceedings"[35] and for a week pestered Beaconsfield and Hardy with telegrams urging that "every effort to get Army efficient and ready for action will at once be carried out."[36] All this animated and pardonably exaggerated response told Beaconsfield that "the country is greatly stirring at last;"

33. Confidential Memorandum by Col. R.Home, 9 February 1878, WOP, W22.

34. Cambridge to Duke of Edinburgh, 30 January 1878, Cambridge Papers.

35. Queen Victoria to Beaconsfield, 7 February 1878; Buckle, Life, pp.243-7.

36. Queen Victoria to Beaconsfield, cypher tlgm, 12 and 13 February; Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, cypher tlgm, 14 February 1878, Hughenden MSS, XIX/C/472,473 and 478; Ponsonby to Hardy, 14 February 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/261.

and he encountered no trouble in carrying the long-delayed vote of credit (£6,000,000) and ordering a division of the Fleet to be despatched to Constantinople.

But the execution of this last order, maddeningly delayed until 13 February in an atmosphere that daily became increasingly charged with suspicion and mistrust, raised in an even more acute form those disturbing questions concerning the security and role of the Fleet that had been obviated a fortnight before by Beaconsfield's second thoughts, but had now been freshly alluded to by Baker and Home, and were to be greatly magnified in despatches from St. Petersburg and Constantinople, especially by the War Office representatives and naval commanders on the spot. In forwarding his instructions to Hornby, Smith emphasised that the Russian armistice conditions - in leaving "a large portion of the European side of the Sea of Marmara and the shore of the Aegean" under Russian control and calling for the abandonment of the Bujuk Checkmedji line - made it plain that "all possibility of defence has been taken away" and that the decision concerning the division of the Fleet had been made "to provide some security for the safety of British subjects and British property which might be seriously imperilled by a sudden panic or commotion." The Admiralty had "of course been somewhat anxious about the security and safety of the Channel;" but Russia appeared "studiously to have avoided the appearance of controlling it by keeping clear of Bulair and Gallipoli;" our diplomatic posture was still one of complete though technical neutrality, and there was "every hope that we shall be in agreement with them on the questions of the Straits and of Constantinople when we meet in Conference."

While therefore "keeping a very vigilant lookout at everything which could possibly be dangerous," the Admiralty was "anxious to avoid any cause of offense to either side," and for this reason wished "to make it clear that one ship, Swiftsure, was not to go in order to prevent any possible mischance looking at the proximity of Russian forces." Nevertheless, he judged the situation to be "very grave and one which requires good judgement and good faith all round if Europe is to keep as I hope she will out of war." "Public feeling here is running very high," Smith concluded, "and an error on either side might very easily bring on a war which it will require both coolness and firmness to avoid....If we only hear in a day or two that you are safely anchored at Constantinople we shall begin to breathe a little more freely."[37]

But the Turks, feeling certain that the appearance of the British fleet would be followed by Russian occupation, obstinately refused to grant the necessary firmans: and only after three days incessant and exasperating parleyings ("we have had fearfully hard work," wrote Currie, "and a most anxious time"[38]), was permission finally conceded. Salisbury's intervention at this point was probably decisive. Suspicious that Turkish intransigence stemmed from a secret engagement with Russia to enable that power leisurely to fortify the Bosphorus and so protect her maritime communications in the Black Sea, Salisbury felt compelled by the

37. Smith to Hornby, 9 February 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6/11.

38. Currie to Layard, 14 February 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

"very graveness" of the crisis to urge that the Fleet force the Dardanelles regardless of Turkish, Cabinet or Admiralty objections. "It is the most critical moment we have yet passed through." He could not "help fearing that efforts will be made in Cabinet to prevent the fleet being ordered to force its way in. Yet if, after all that has been said, the fleet once more returns to Besika Bay, our position will be utterly ridiculous. We shall disgust our friends in the country, and lose all weight in Europe....Both, therefore, as a question of ultimate policy, and in view of the immediate moral effect our fleet ought to force its way in without delay."[39] Accordingly, on 13 February, to the "great relief" of the Foreign Office and the First Sea Lord (who had deliberately not been consulted in the decision), the Fleet passed without resistance through the Dardanelles; "but how would it be," wrote Wellesley, mindful of the tactical disadvantages and technical limitations of an iron-clad fleet, "if ships and Forts were firing at each other with very little wind to blow the smoke away and compasses not to be depended upon and the Captain in his tower directing the Ship."[40]

As has been implied, neither the Foreign Office, the Ambassador nor the Admiralty were comfortable with the decision to send the Fleet to Constantinople. As a diplomatic manoevre it was much too late; strategically it was impotent to offset Russia's commanding military position in favour of the

39. Salisbury to Beaconsfield, confdl, 10 February 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ce/232.

40. Currie to Layard, 14 February 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130; Wellesley to Hornby, 2 March 1878; 'Letters received - Admiralty,' Hornby Papers, PHI/118b.

Turk; while tactically Hornby and the Admiralty (though Commerell disagreed) had argued all along that it could not prevent a Russian occupation of Constantinople or assist materially in its defence. Indeed its presence in the Sea of Marmara now ensured that occupation in reprisal. Moreover, Wellesley would not be surprised if Gourko disregarded his Government's undertaking not to attack the lines of Bulair and occupy Gallipoli, thereby ensnaring the Fleet; and he was particularly anxious that "Commerell would be able to get back with his ships to the Forts and destroy the Guns before the Russian cavalry could get there." "We should have maintained our end," he told Hornby, "by keeping at a distance and in force ready to strike hard if necessary.... If we only had the Peninsula of Gallipoli I think we might leave the great Eastern Question alone."[41] At the same time, Currie believed, as did Wolseley, that the country was "warming up to the idea of war," that there would be "no shrinking from it" if it was found necessary, and that the sending of the Fleet was an accurate representation of that feeling. Although "it seemed cruel to persist" in the decision, "considering how far things had gone it was inevitable and in the long run" would turn out best for the Turks. "If we had not given Russia this pretext for entering Constantinople," he told Layard, "she would have found another and it is of the greatest importance that we should have our fleet in a position where it can interfere with the return by sea of the Russian army and thus help Austria."[42] Both Currie

41. Wellesley to Hornby, 21 February and 2 March 1878, Hornby Papers, ibid.

42. Currie to Layard, 14 February 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

and Wolseley were agreed that Russia was "playing a big game of brag at present," that "her army South of the Balkans fit for work cannot number more than 50,000 at the outside 60,000 men and her soldiers are suffering greatly from disease;" and that, considering the Austrian negociations, Russia would not "be such a fool as to do anything which she knows would make us declare war."[43]

Two days later, on 15 February, the worst fears and misgivings of the Admiralty concerning the security of the Fleet while the fate of the Gallipoli Peninsula still hung in the balance, seemed suddenly and startlingly about to be realised: the cumulative and multiplicate effect of despatches and telegrams from Loftus and Layard, Dickson and Fife, and Hornby and Commerell rendered the shock all the more large, sudden and grave, and resulted in the most important series of Cabinet decisions made in the crisis up to this point. Since the beginning of January, Loftus had urged the Cabinet to occupy the Gallipoli Peninsula to forestall Russian military objectives since it was their fixed intention to obtain a permanent footing on the Bosphorus and seize the Turkish fleet. Gourko's imminent occupation of the Dardanelles - persistently advocated by the Russian press as a reprisal against British military preparations - would ensure the capitulation of the Turkish Navy and, together with the movement of torpedoes from Odessa and the Danube ostensibly to destroy the British fleet and "prevent British naval aid reaching Austria," would effectually curb Britain's freedom of action and intervention.[44]

43. Ibid; Wolseley to R.Wolseley, 18 February 1878, WFP.

44. Loftus to Derby, no.245, pte and confdl, 20 February 1878, PRO/FO 65/999.

The most crucial supporting intelligence for these apprehensions was provided by Fife and Hornby. It seemed evident to Fife, the British military attache at Gallipoli, that the ambiguity or absence of orders concerning the occupation of Malgara, Keshen, Sharkoi and Enos, the collection of considerable forces at these points, the coming and going of foraging and surveying parties meant that "virtually so far as the Gallipoli Peninsula is concerned there has been no armistice to impede the approach of the Russians;" that "a repetition of a similar event to the abandonment of Tcheckmedji lines should not take England by surprise;" and that if hostilities were recommenced every preparation was being made by Russia to assault the Bulair lines in force - an assault which, in view of the relative weakness of the Turkish garrison (19 - 22,000 men and 95 guns), the "utterly inadequate" armament of the sea forts, the inexplicable absence of Turkish warships to provide flanking fire along the Gallipoli Peninsula coasts, and the treacherous disposition of Suleiman Pasha, would not meet with much if any resistance. Moreover, there were forty miles of coastline between Bulair and the Dardanelles susceptible to hostile Russian landings in the Turkish rear; it was estimated that there was locally available sufficient sea transport at Dedeagatch, Enos and Rodosto to carry 40,000 Russian troops and Fife believed that "mysterious steamers" were lurking about laying torpedoes, taking soundings and examining landing places in preparation for an amphibious operation. "It is probable that an attack in great force by sea and land would be combined," Fife wrote on 10 February, "and that the resistance offered would not be very great; even

if a pre-arranged plan for a repetition of the Tcheckmedji retreat, or something similar does not exist. If it were certain that the defence would be made in good faith, and that war vessels would flank the lines and watch the coasts, the Peninsula would be safe against all attacks; but neither of these appear even probable." Fife's answer to this situation was to suggest a "previously concerted plan" whereby, while working assiduously for the deposition of Süleiman and his replacement by a trustworthy Governor, should a rupture appear imminent, Suleiman should be "bought" (or alternatively forcibly seized at night by a body of marines and placed on board a British man-of-war), his garrison induced by offers of British pay and pension to accept British service; while a motley force of 3,000 marines, regulars and Maltese volunteers or fencibles occupy and defend the Maitos lines until the arrival of a British expeditionary force.

Hornby, in close and continuous communication with Fife, fully endorsed these views, suggesting to Smith that it was a pity that the power for concerting such a plan was "not in the hands of someone on the spot - say the Ambassador or Sir Collingwood Dickson." "It might save us from a great disaster," he wrote, "which may occur while instructions are sought from home even by telegraph. It is a startling thing to think that the day after tomorrow the Russians may march through the Gallipoli lines."[45] "My idea," he told Layard on 9 February, "is that the Russians could not attack in force in less than six days. That if orders were given me to help the Turks I should send some

45. Hornby to Smith, pte, 14 February 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6.

ships at once to flank the approaches and land 500 men who will make good artillery. The material aid would not be great but the moral encouragement of showing we were coming to help them would be considerable. I should send 3 ships to Malta which if the Governor cooperated vigorously should land 3,000 troops here at Gallipoli in 8 days. With 3500 Englishmen helping the Turks we ought to hold the lines against any force they can bring for a fortnight by which time the reinforcements from home would be due." Moreover, he would put part of his fleet in the Gulf of Xeros "where ships can afford more aid to the defence of the lines than from the Straits," and where they could best frustrate any Russian amphibious turning movements. Finally, he "advocated the withdrawal of the Ships from the Eastward of the Sea of Marmara:"

> I have not heard what your project is for their use, and cannot conceive any which could not be equally well carried out if they were about Gallipoli fully coaled. But I do see that while we are at the East end, and Gallipoli not secured we run the risk of a check which would be very discreditable to us. In fact, I look upon the peninsula and the Dardanelles as the key of the Naval position. If we hold these we can command the Turkish Fleet. If we lose them, the Fleet would be of no use and we should have to go as far west as Salonica to find a base, and that a less influential one for any military operations.[46]

All these despatches were capped by anxious pleas from the Sultan that if Britain provided officers, men and money in the defence of Constantinople, he would place "his fleet at the disposal of H.M.G....under the command of an English Admiral and to be officered by English officers,"

46. Ibid; Hornby to Layard, 9 and 11 February 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

adding with great emphasis that if he only had English officers to assist him and the means of providing for his armies, he would yet be able "to drive the Russians back to Adrianople."[47]

The Cabinet, however, while agreeing to inform the Sultan through Layard "that we will use our utmost influence to prevent Russia from entering Constantinople: that in the interests of the Sultan and of the ultimate freedom of Constantinople we consider it to be of the utmost importance that the navigation of the Dardanelles should not fall under Russian control," refused to bind themselves to an active alliance.[48] At the same time, in order to "make the Turks think that we have not altogether retired from the game," Layard was ordered to finalise negociations for the purchase of the four best Turkish warships. Hornby was directed to assist; but "not to prevent by force the transfer of the Turkish fleet to the Russian flag" unless specially instructed from home to do so. Finally, "all ships but one" were to be withdrawn from Besika Bay to the Gulf of Xeros to observe, and prevent by force if necessary, any Russian attempt to land at Gallipoli or in rear of the Bulair lines. Commerell was not to assist in defending these, but if they were "taken or yield," he was "to do everything in his power to destroy

47. Layard to Derby, no.238, most secret, 15 February 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39128.

48. Derby to Layard, dft tlgm, no.240, secret, 16 February 1878, PRO/FO 78/2766.

the heavy guns in the fortress on the Gallipoli peninsula."[49]

The case for withdrawing the Fleet entirely from the Sea of Marmara was reviewed the following day at an Admiralty Conference (consisting of Smith, Wellesley, Hood, Gifford and Codrington) attended by Simmons prior to the "momentous" Cabinet meeting of 16 February.[50] The Conference concluded that the European forts at the Dardanelles would become untenable if the Peninsula was overrun by Russians; that the Fleet alone could not regain possession; and that the subsequent positioning of medium guns along the heights and the laying of torpedoes in the Channels rendered the presence of the Fleet so "extremely hazardous" that it should be recalled to blockade the entrance of the Dardanelles. These conclusions formed part of the basis of Cabinet discussion later the same day. "Our fleet will not move," Beaconsfield afterwards telegraphed the Queen,[51] "but remain in the Sea of Marmara. We are making arrangements to secure our communications and increasing our naval forces in the Mediterranean."

Layard was to ask the Sultan to agree that if the Bulair lines were forced, "the forts on the Asiatic side

49. Ibid; same to same, dft tlgm, no.227, most secret, 14 February 1878, ibid; Note by Smith, 15 February 1878, 'Telegrams and Correspondence: Dardanelles,' Hughenden MSS, XVI/F/9; Smith to Queen Victoria, 15 February 1878, ibid, XIX/C/480; 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon MSS, PS6; Smith to Hornby, confdl, 16 February 1878, 'Letters of W.H.Smith, 1878,' Hornby Papers, PHI/118.

50. 'Memorandum of Points discussed at a meeting at the Admiralty on 16 February 1878,' J.L.A.Simmons, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4.

51. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, cypher tlgm, 17 February 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/481.

should be occupied by Great Britain without armed resistance on his part;" but the Ambassador was also privately instructed to "suggest any method by which it would be possible for the protection of our fleet to get possession of the Dardanelles forts so as to destroy or remove the guns in the event of the Bulair lines not being maintained."[52] The Channel Fleet was ordered from Gibralter to Malta (where, Smith privately informed Hornby "they may possibly take some men on board and proceed to Besika, but you had better keep this to yourself"[53]); Fraser was once again ordered to stand by to blow up the batteries at the Dardanelles;[54] and a telegraph cable was to be laid from Chios to Tenedos. It seems also to have been a result of this Cabinet (although, since no mention was made to the Queen, it was conceivably a private arrangement between Hardy and Beaconsfield) that the Duke of Cambridge be approached to suggest commanders-in-chief designate of a possible expeditionary force to Lemnos or Mitylene, commanding the western entrances to the Straits in the event of a Russian occupation of Gallipoli and the forcible exclusion of the Fleet from the Sea of Marmara.[55]

This command question will be dealt with more thoroughly later, but all these measures indicated that the Cabinet, precluded by their undertaking not to occupy Gallipoli, were

52. Derby to Layard, dft tlgm, secret, no.240, 16 February 1878; dft, most secret, s.d., PRO/FO 78/2766.

53. Smith to Hornby, confdl, 16 February 1878, 'Letters of W.H.Smith, 1878,' Hornby Papers, PHI/118.

54. Fraser, Recollections, p.411.

55. Hardy to Beaconsfield, 16 February 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/153.

at last thinking seriously of alternatives to the Gallipoli Peninsula for securing the Indian sea-route, although according to Fraser, "what has weakened everything is that the Government cling to a false hope of at the last turning to Chanak" - a policy both he, Simmons and the Admiralty deprecated.[56] But the Chanak policy was completely shattered by the Sultan's reactions to Derby's requests. According to instructions, Layard asked the Sultan:

> 1. Whether there were sufficient troops at Gallipoli to hold the lines of Bulair in case of a Russian attack, whether their commander could be depended upon, and whether he was determined to hold the Gallipoli Peninsula.
> 2. Whether in the event of the Russians forcing the Bulair lines, and advancing towards the Dardanelles, the orders given to the Commandant to throw the heavy guns into the sea, to move the ammunition and stores to the opposite shore, and to destroy what could not be moved would be carried out;
> 3. Whether in the event of the Russians entering the Gallipoli Peninsula His Majesty would consent to the occupation of the forts on the Asiatic side by British troops.[57]

But the Sultan, pained that Britain could not see that the defence of Constantinople was more important than that of Gallipoli, claimed that the Bulair lines, too, could not and would not be held against a Russian attack unless they were supported by British naval flanking gunfire. He assured Layard that orders had been given to dismantle and destroy the Dardanelles batteries, transport ammunition and supplies to the Asiatic side, and place the Chanak forts at the disposal of the British, provided they no longer retained

56. Fraser to Hornby, pte, 7 February 1878, 'Letters from Ambassadors etc...,' Hornby Papers, PHI/119.

57. Layard to Derby, no.257, secret, 20 February 1878, PRO/FO 78/2780.

an attitude of neutrality and became allies of Turkey.[58] Both Layard and Dickson advocated an alliance with Turkey in the defence of Bulair which they believed "could be held...with ease against any army that the Russians could bring against them, provided that the operations of defence be directed and superintended by British officers, and such strength of seamen and marines as can be spared by the ships of war, say from 1,000 to 1,500 men." The Fleet should at the same time prevent Russian operations by sea in the Gulfs of Xeros and Enos and in the Sea of Marmara.[59] The Peninsula "could thus be held until the arrival of British troops would place it in complete safety and secure the navigation of the Dardanelles." Layard felt unable to suggest means of destroying the Dardanelles' batteries without expert professional advice;[60] but Hornby informed the Admiralty independently that his forces were "insufficient to destroy heavy guns without Turkish consent;" that the position of Gallipoli was "most critical," and that "it cannot be assured without a speedy undertaking with the Turkish Government."[61] Commerell felt he would "have to trust to the panic which might ensue to enable me to clear up the guns." "But I must say," he told Hornby, "that to attempt to do it in face of the Asiatic side would be madness. What we want is permission to defend the Bulair lines in flank as well as afloat....The

58. Ibid; also no.245, 19 February 1878; secret, 20 February 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39145, 39128.

59. Layard to Hornby, 17,19,20 February 1878, ibid, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

60. Ibid.

61. Hornby to Admiralty, tlgm, 18 February 1878, 'Telegrams and Correspondence: Dardanelles,' Hughenden MSS, XVI/F/11.

land lays well this side for cutting up the flank - and we could search the ravines before the lines and help the Turks wonderfully. That way we could also, if Bulair's advance forts fell, do a great deal in preventing a break-through being executed there. In fact our defence in flank would make all the difference in the world....Now or never is the time if we intend to fight for the Peninsula. Now is the time and it could be held I think until some effectual measure could be taken to secure it."[62] It was against this background of military as well as diplomatic considerations - the Turkish reluctance to allow a British occupation of Chanak except as an ally, long-standing professional objections, and the Admiralty's expressed inability to deal with the Dardanelles' batteries - that on 19 February, Derby agreed further to commit Britain not to land troops on the European or Asiatic sides of the Dardanelles.[63] By so doing, Britain effectively restricted her powers of interference by making them dependent upon Russian promises and actions without extracting in return any material guarantee for the security of the Fleet in the Sea of Marmara.

The situation was but slightly modified the next week when Gortchakov's evasive refusal to give assurances of non-occupation of the Straits was almost immediately followed by Russian demands for the surrender of the Turkish fleet and the entry of 30,000 Russian troops into Constantinople, by the Russian forward movement to San Stephano, by harrowing accounts from Layard as to the enormity of the peace terms

62. Commerell to Hornby, 19 February 1878, 'Letters-Naval Officers, 1877,' Hornby Papers, PHI/120a.

63. Accounts and Papers, 1878, LXXXI, C.1954, nos.1 and 2.

demanded by Ignatiev and of their implications for Indian defence and maritime warfare, and by Hornby's request whether under the circumstances his instructions regarding intervention still held good.[64] "Things look as bad as they possibly can," wrote Currie, "and I fear there is not much chance of our being able to do anything to check the outrageous demands of Russia. If the Turkish fleet is made over to Russia under the guns of our ships the position will be a ridiculous one. The ways of the Government are past finding out....It is a melancholy ending to all these months of useless labour."[65] Hornby's natural reaction was to suggest that the Fleet assist in the defence of Constantinople;[66] from St. Petersburg, Loftus urged the extreme desirability of getting the Russians to promise not to occupy the Bosphorus;[67] while Fraser saw that "the only chance" left was "to induce the Turks to agree to our occupying Gallipoli." "We should cut the telegraph wires at Malta," he wrote Hornby, "lay an embargo on all ships of suspicion, splice a line and retain the line in Government hands on the ground it could not bear

64. Hornby to Admiralty, 20 February 1878, 'Telegrams and Correspondence: Dardanelles,' Hughenden MSS, XVI/F/12; Foreign Office to Admiralty, secret and immediate, 20 February 1878; Admiralty to Foreign Office, 21 February 1878, 'Preparations for War with Russia,' PRO/ADM/1/6455; Layard to Derby, 20 February 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130,39144.

65. Currie to Layard, 21 February 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50018.

66. Hornby to Admiralty, tlgm, 21 February 1878, 'Telegrams and Correspondence: Dardanelles,' Hughenden MSS, XVI/F/14.

67. Loftus to Derby, no.245, pte and confdl, 20 February 1878, PRO/FO 65/999.

much work. Then ship the troops and get them to you before anyone in Europe knew of it."[68] In the event, Hornby was instructed to assist the Bulair lines if seriously attacked; while in London (at Northcote's suggestion) Derby warned Schouvalov that if Russian troops entered Constantinople without the consent of the Sultan, Loftus would be withdrawn.[69] Currie believed, however, that the Government had "taken no step to meet the contingencies which such a withdrawal may lead to,"[70] and Hornby, in contrast with his orders relative to Bulair, was instructed not to attempt armed resistance to a Russian entry into Constantinople.[71]

For two months, the attention of British sailors, soldiers and statesmen had been focussed on the suspicious and shifting military situation in and around Constantinople. Each Russian forward movement had been met with a British response pledging not to land troops on the European and Asiatic shores of the Dardanelles or Straits provided Russia undertook not to occupy Gallipoli or enter Constantinople. But so long as Russia did not actually occupy these vital strategic points, and so long as Britain felt bound to honour her pledges, the advantages of this situation clearly lay with the Russians. They succeeded firmly in retaining the initiative; and if they did not physically occupy the Gallipoli

68. Fraser to Hornby, pte, 21 February 1878, 'Letters from Ambassadors etc...,' Hornby Papers, PHI/119.

69. Derby to Layard, dft tlgm, no.284, 22 February 1878, PRO/FO 78/2766; Northcote to Beaconsfield, confdl, 17 February 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/N/67.

70. Currie to Layard, 21 February 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50018.

71. Derby to Layard, dft tlgm, no.284, 22 February 1878, PRO/FO 78/2766.

Peninsula or Constantinople, they held such commanding positions at Dedeagatch, Rodosto, San Stephano and Tchataldja that they could have done so long before Britain could intervene. The potential usefulness of the Fleet, so alarmingly apparent to the Admiralty and the naval commanders on the spot, was therefore neutralised, and ran the further risk of imminent strangulation. It was doubtful whether sufficient troops could be sent from Malta to Gallipoli to forestall a decisive Russian attack before the arrival of heavier British reinforcements; whether the Fleet could force the Straits without sustaining crippling losses; and whether, even if it could, there would be a guaranteed coal supply (the Heraclea mines being presumably in Russian hands) to admit of prolonged naval operations on the Black Sea.

As the peace terms became known to Layard, it became clear to him that Turkey had been conquered "after and under the cloak of the armistice," and that every apparent Russian concession had been a worthless sop meant to keep England quiet and at a distance while the Turks were brow-beaten into accepting a ruinous peace.[72] That this was so became apparent with the signature of the Treaty of San Stephano, deliberately delayed to emphasise its dramatically triumphant effect until 3 March - the date of the accession of the Tsar and of the abolition of serfdom. The complete text of San Stephano was received in London on 16 March, but it had been preceded by full summaries of the main provisions (notably those concerning the extension of a large Bulgaria to the Aegean, and the annexation of southern Bessarabia, Ardahan,

72. Layard to Derby, 20 February 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

Kars, Batoum, Bayazid and the territory up to the Soghanli), which inevitably raised "a howl of execration," and brought England to the very brink of war with Russia.[73] "The whole Treaty," wrote Loftus, "amounts to the destruction of Turkish rule in Europe and to the partition of Turkey amongst the Slav race under Russian protection."[74] In Layard's eyes, it was the apotheosis of Russia's "marvellous and unparalleled skill and duplicity;" the two key provisions ensured the "eventual possession of the Straits" and upset the maritime balance of power in the Mediterranean and Black Seas.[75] In Kemball's opinion, it was almost equally fatal in its effects upon Asiatic Turkey and Britain's Eastern influence: for it gave Russia possession of the head-waters of the Euphrates, direct command of the major military land routes, and, by controlling the reservoir of Turkey's human military resources, increased "power of offensive action in the future."[76] The Daily Telegraph was particularly violent in its denunciations.[77] "Anything more monstrous than the terms of peace are it is hardly possible to imagine:"

> By this instrument Russia is not content with the annihilation of Turkey in Europe....The new Bulgaria will be a Russian province, the Muscovite outposts will be advanced to the Aegean; and the Black Eagle will cover with its wings

73. Thompson, Public Opinion, p.380.

74. Loftus to Derby, no.339, 21 March 1878, PRO/FO 65/1001.

75. Layard to Derby, no.342, 13 March 1878, PRO/FO 78/2781.

76. Same to same, no.325, 8 March 1878, ibid.

77. Daily Telegraph, 4 March 1878; Thompson, Public Opinion, p.380.

the entire tract from the Pruth to the Mediterranean. We say that these articles of conquest entrench upon, if they do not break down, every condition in 'the charter of our policy' laid before the whole world by Lord Derby's famous speech of May 6th. Each vital point which we declared ourselves "equally bound and determined to defend" is either openly assailed or covertly undermined; and if we accept such a peace we shall sign away the rights and the heritage of Englishmen.

Lord Salisbury's circular of 1 April, in a departure from the routine of Tenterdenism which Beaconsfield so much despised, echoed almost identical sentiments in language whose strength and unequivocacy was barely concealed beneath its formal dress.[78] "This country is nearly uninhabitable for a civilised man," wrote Mallet, summing up the national mood for a correspondent in India, "the Jingoes have for the time a complete ascendancy. Drums and fife all over the place - rowdyism rampant - and mob rule the order of the day."[79] But what kind of military plans and preparations were in fact being made; what indeed was the nature of the Government's military policy in anticipation of a war with Russia; to what extent were these policies, plans and preparations capable of producing victory should war eventuate; and how far were they responsible for bringing Russia to the long conference table at Berlin?

In order to provide some solution to these questions, we must retrace our steps to 16 February when it was decided to consult the Duke of Cambridge as to prospective commanders "in case of need" for an expeditionary force to seize Lemnos or Mitylene "to watch the Dardanelles and blockade them if

78. Ibid.

79. Mallet to Strachey, pte, 24 May 1878, Strachey Papers.

possible" and to "take up good positions in these Islands so as to defend them against attack from without should the fleet be absent."[80] But the choice of higher commanders, as Hardy was shocked to discover, was exceedingly limited. "He really has no one but Napier to recommend," Hardy confided in his diary, " - a strange state of things."[81] "It is curious how few men have been tried," he wrote to Beaconsfield,[82] "and the disinclination to try them in command." The Duke had at first suggested that Sir Richard Airey be recalled to harness; "but to take a man of 75 or more would be a very unwise step," rejoined Hardy.[83] Beaconsfield's own special choice seemed to lie with Colonel Valentine Baker whom he described to the Queen as "no common person...a first-rate man," who "in the event of war may play a great part and accomplish vast service;"[84] but no matter how reprehensible Baker's dismissal from the British army may have been, and no matter how much Beaconsfield sympathised with Baker over his treatment, it is doubtful whether the Queen, fortified by the Duke's sense of military propriety, would have consented to such an extraordinary appointment. The choice of commanders therefore rapidly narrowed down to Napier or Wolseley.

Napier's appointment as Commander-in-Chief designate would have been (and was) obvious and popular. Both as a

80. Cambridge to Duke of Edinburgh, 16 May 1878, Cambridge Papers.

81. Private diary, 17 February 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

82. Hardy to Beaconsfield, 16 February 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/153.

83. Private diary, 17 February 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

84. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 23 February 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/488.

commander and military administrator, he was undoubtedly the foremost soldier of his day. Long experience in India, culminating in his tenure as Commander-in-Chief, had given him an unassailable reputation as an expert on Asiatic warfare and frontier administration. Ten years before, he had commanded with marked success the largest British expeditionary force sent overseas since the Crimean War, and at Magdala had exacted a just and honourable peace. As an Engineer, he was particularly well-suited for the initial defensive operations that would likely characterise the opening stages of a war against Russia. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, he was a favourite of the Queen and the Duke of Cambridge. Nevertheless, he possessed two potential weaknesses: firstly, a tendency toward grandiose schemes of war preparation (a common failing among Indian officers in general and among Engineers in particular); and secondly, his age, a shortcoming which became immediately evident.[85] In terms of experience in command and high-level military administration, Wolseley was much less qualified. Prior to Ashanti, he had never held an independent command in war; and even there, his regular force comprised no more than 1,200 men. He had an almost vicious contempt for naval officers, colonial administrators, politicians, newspaper correspondents, Marlborough House and rival colleagues; and was in turn looked upon by the Queen and the Duke of Cambridge as an irresponsible and dangerous military firebrand. Nevertheless, he was an acknowledged master of small-war administ-

85. Private diary, 3 March 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11; Fraser to Hornby, 28 February 1878, 'Letters from Ambassadors etc...,' Hornby Papers, PHI/119.

ration, and a competent subordinate commander with an uncanny ability to select good lieutenants. Since the beginning of the crisis, he had judiciously kept his name before the public with frequent articles in professional and popular journals, and before the Cabinet with unsolicited memoranda. Perhaps his most valuable asset, particularly in a prolonged war, or one calling for deep raids, was his comparative youth. On 17 February, therefore, Beaconsfield and Hardy decided to appoint Napier as Commander-in-Chief designate with Wolseley as Chief of Staff;[86] it was an arrangement, wrote Hardy, which "would secure freedom from jealousy."[87] Napier was forthwith recalled from Gibralter, ostensibly "for his Parliamentary duties," but in fact to begin preliminary consultations on war policy.[88] On 26 February, he had his first interview with Beaconsfield and the Duke of Cambridge;[89] and two days later, on 28 February, the provisional appointments were made public. "This intimation, conditional as it is," commented the Daily News, "brings us nearer in view of war than anything that has been written or spoken on Ministerial authority."[90]

In Napier's opinion, "there could be no doubt the

86. Hardy to Beaconsfield, 17 February 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/154; Cambridge to Hardy, 17 February 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/273.

87. Same to same, 16 February 1878, ibid, B/XX/Ha/153.

88. Ibid.

89. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 26 February 1878, ibid, B/XIX/C/488.

90. Daily News, 28 February 1878; Thompson, Public Opinion, p.404.

first thing to be done was to place two army corps in a complete state of preparation, with ships ready and everything ready for transporting them wherever required."[91] Colonel Home had already prepared detailed lists of eventual purchases, amounting to £1,100,200, to be provided by the vote of credit;[92] and by 14 March, the Permanent Mobilisation Committee (now merged with the Combined Operations Committee), under the guise of spring manoevres, had completed preparations for mobilising two army corps, and calling out the Army and Militia Reserves.[93] But where, when and for what purposes these troops were to be used, especially in view of the vague and complicated military situation around Constantinople and the Dardanelles and of the non-alignment of Austria, were questions which until the terms of San Stephano made war with Russia a clear probability, the Cabinet found difficult to answer and perhaps even evaded. In view of the imminent Russian seizure of Constantinople and Gallipoli, the surrender of the Turkish fleet and probable annexations in Armenia, in view also of the impracticability of holding Chanak against the dropping gunfire from across the Narrows or from a landward attack in rear without first ensuring the command of Gallipoli, the neutralisation of the Dardanelles' batteries and the freedom of naval communications on the Sea of Marmara, the seizure of an island or number of islands in the Aegean, Mediterranean or the Persian Gulf, with or

91. 'Memorandum relative to the proceedings on 2 March 1878,' J.L.A.Simmons, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4.

92. 'Memorandum on Vote of Credit, 20 February 1878,' Hughenden MSS, XVI/D/68d.

93. WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0738, 'Proceedings of Confidential Committee etc...,' pp.104-22, WOP.

without Turkish consent, seemed a necessary first step towards blockading the Dardanelles, towards establishing bridgeheads on Gallipoli or elsewhere for the re-opening of the Straits (and the re-entry of British sea-power into the Black Sea), and towards intercepting a Russian advance upon India through Persia: and after 16 February, Hardy began "quietly" to collect "more information about Mitylene and Lemnos."[94]

The question of seizing a Turkish island was probably discussed in vague terms by Beaconsfield, the Duke of Cambridge, Napier and Wolseley on 26 February; and, if Beaconsfield's account is to be believed, was first broached to the Cabinet the following day.[95] The scheme was hardly novel or secret: it had been continuously aired in the Press since August 1876; it had long lurked in Beaconsfield's mind; it had led to the recall of Colonel Home's mission in February 1877 but had also resulted in secret reconnaissances by Edwards and Tryon. "The occupation of some base in the vicinity of the Dardanelles," Beaconsfield wrote to the Queen, "is so reasonable that it is in the air and in the conversation of the street."[96]

Nevertheless, Derby's failure to repudiate (and therefore seeming acquiescence in) Schouvalov's pretension that a British seizure of Mitylene, Crete, or both would "release Russia from all her engagements to us (including that against the occupation of Gallipoli)," was viewed by the rest of the

94. Hardy to Beaconsfield, 23 February 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/123.

95. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 28 February 1878, ibid, XIX/C/409.

96. Ibid.

Cabinet as a lapse in bad taste if not technically in secrecy, particularly since no firm decision had been arrived at concerning the Turkish island. "Eight members of the Cabinet (all but yourself, Derby, Hardy and Smith) dined with the Duke of Cambridge tonight," Northcote wrote Beaconsfield on 27 February,[97] "and all our eight heads of hair stood upright on reading the account of Derby's conversation with Schouvalov on the subject of the possible seizure of a Turkish island." He had "just written" to Derby, doubting whether the Foreign Secretary's views "correctly expressed" those of the Government. He had "by no means" made up his own mind "whether we ought to seize an island or not;" but he could not "admit that if we did so it would in the slightest degree absolve Russia from her engagements regarding the Dardanelles so long as we kept our own." Derby, while regretting "that drafts on important foreign questions are sent round and round at dinners" making "it easy to understand how so little of what we do or say is kept secret," firmly maintained his ground that "the seizure of a Turkish island, in time of peace, without explanation or justification except that it may be a convenient point for us to hold in the event of war, would be an act so violent and so entirely disturbing on existing relations with other countries concerned in the eastern question, that the Russian government might not unreasonably treat it as absolving her from the Gallipoli engagement."[98] He was fortified in his arguments by a long

97. Northcote to Beaconsfield, confdl, 27 February 1878, ibid, B/XX/N/69.

98. Derby to Northcote, 28 February 1878, Iddesleigh Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50022.

memorandum by Tenterden setting out the advantages and disadvantages of such a "decided move."[99] Affirmatively, the Porte would probably consent to such an occupation if it became necessary to withdraw the fleet from the Sea of Marmara: it would in turn afford the means of withdrawal without humiliation or pressure from Russia. It would constitute no direct assault on Russia's military position in the Balkans; yet it would prevent the emergence of Russian sea-power in the Mediterranean. Since the armistice had in effect already abrogated the Treaty of Paris, it could not be offensive to the other interested European powers and might ultimately provide a basis for negociation. On the other hand, the Porte was not likely to agree to a friendly occupation, and a forcible seizure might drive it to conclude a Russian alliance. It would violate the principle of the maintenance of the "integrity and independence of the Turkish Empire" and set an example of unprincipled grasping for territory. Strategically, it would have no direct or immediate effect upon Russia's military grip on Turkey, and might even offer Russia a pretext for entering Constantinople. In Tenterden's opinion (shared by Derby), the disadvantages outweighed the advantages; and he proposed instead the occupation of Suez with Indian troops. Beaconsfield brushed the whole issue lightly aside.[100] "There has been no treachery in imparting information to Russia," he told the Queen who was growing increasingly concerned over the questionable loyalty of Derby

99. 'Memorandum: Occupation of an Island,' Tenterden to Derby, 27 February 1878, 'Letters from Tenterden,' Derby Papers.

100. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 28 February 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/489.

and his wife, and Derby's "disclaimer" would probably "throw the Russians off their balance." Nevertheless, the incident amounted to another entry in Derby's catalogue of indiscretions. Moreover, it was now clear that the Foreign Secretary would almost certainly resign if the issue were pressed.

Conscious of these ramifications or not, the Prime Minister pushed on his discussions of military policy although still with no definite objectives in mind. "We are all busy in 'girding our armour on'," wrote Fraser from Whitehall to Hornby,[101] "but we are none of us sure or indeed able to say where for." At the next Cabinet, on 2 May, Beaconsfield again raised the question of "the military position of the country, as affecting its communications with the East," suggesting Mitylene, Acre and "a post on the Persian Gulf" - which "would give a strong chain of communication with India" - as points of possible occupation in the event of war. In spite of a "sort of protest" by Derby "against the principle of occupation," a committee was appointed "to consult the military and naval authorities as to the best course of action."[102]

On the same day, though before or after the Cabinet is not certain, Beaconsfield and Hardy again interviewed Napier and Wolseley, although in Hardy's opinion "nothing much came" of the meeting, "but they have to think over what was said."[103] "At our meetings with Lord Beaconsfield," wrote

101. Fraser to Hornby, 28 February 1878, 'Letters from Ambassadors etc...,' Hornby Papers, PHI/119.

102. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, most secret, 2 March 1878; Northcote to Queen Victoria, s.d., Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/490 and 491.

103. Hardy to Beaconsfield, 2 March 1878, ibid, B/XX/Ha/155; private diary, 3 March 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

Wolseley in his Cyprus campaign journal on 8 July,[104] "he always spoke in a grandiloquent manner and strain of obtaining for England a counter-poise in the East to the territory acquired by Russia in Armenia. His views were, some position on the mainland of Syria or the coast between it and the Dardanelles, and then another position at the head of the Persian Gulf." Napier was therefore instructed "to consider and let him (Beaconsfield) know which of several places he named Smyrna - Scanderoon - Mitylene - or some other point at the head of the Persian Gulf - thus covering our route to India, or what other place would afford the best material guarantee for us to occupy."[105] Wolseley himself, in an unsolicited memorandum curiously forwarded to Beaconsfield through Northcote upon whom he had "strongly" impressed "the importance of not mentioning it to H.R.H. or others at the Horse Guards" since "it would get out," reiterated his earlier preference for an occupation of Crete as a stepping-stone to the ultimate seizure of Gallipoli.[106] "Boldness and extreme secrecy are required," he wrote, "apart from the direct military and diplomatic advantages which the possession of the Bulair lines would confer upon us, the successful accomplishment of such a scheme as the following would evince an amount of adventurous vitality on our part, that would re-establish our renown nearly as well as a battle gained."

104. Wolseley Cyprus Journal, 8 July 1878, PRO/WO 147/5.

105. 'Memorandum relative to the proceedings on 2 March 1878,' J.L.A.Simmons, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4.

106. 'Secret Memorandum,' G.J.Wolseley, 2 March 1878, Iddesleigh Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50022; Northcote to Beaconsfield, secret, 2 March 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/N/20.

Six or eight officers, including V.Baker, H.Brackenbury and F.Burnaby, should be sent to Gallipoli with £100,000 to buy the Turkish commander and garrison and prepare for the reception of an infantry division from England. Napier however, who had been made party to this memorandum, and who suspected that Wolseley was already intriguing to supplant him, preferred to take the advice of Simmons and Home.[107]

Immediately after his meeting with the Prime Minister, Napier joined Simmons at the Buckingham Palace Hotel to talk matters over.[108] He opened the conversation by referring to Wolseley's plan for seizing Gallipoli. Simmons replied in the way of pointing out "the difficulties of few landings - which are all commanded by heights more or less near - which in the event of Russia being in possession would be armed with guns and probably entrenched." The initial landing operations would therefore be "very difficult," although Simmons had no objection to "sending out Genl. Baker or some other officer" to investigate and privately "sound out" the Turks as to whether "they might be induced to hold it" or not. Napier "then spoke of the possibility of seizing some island from which to blockade the Dardanelles - such as Lemnos, Imbros or Mitylene." Napier thought that Mitylene was "rather out of the way" but that "the possession of Lemnos would be as effective as that of the South End of the Peninsula - and not so liable to attack - if the Russians

107. Napier to Lady Napier, 5 April 1878, Napier Family Papers.

108. 'Memorandum...2 March 1878,' J.L.A.Simmons, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/4.

held the upper end and were in possession of the batteries at the Narrows." As to Mitylene, Simmons observed that while it possessed "some advantages," for "permanent occupation" it was "not so suitable as Stampalia" which had been reported upon by Colonel Edwards the previous summer as requiring too large a garrison. Three further possibilities were envisaged; Acre, Scanderoon and Salonica depending on the purposes to which the expeditionary force was to be put. If the object was "to cover Egypt," Acre was of no use since it could be turned. If Egypt was to be defended against a land attack, this could best be done either by occupying "the line in front of the Suez Canal" as recommended in MacDougall's plan, or by occupying Scanderoon. But if war with Russia were intended, the occupation of Scanderoon "would produce no result, as it was so far from the Russian forces at Erzeroum." A war with Russia, Simmons contended, "would have to be fought out in Bulgaria with the object of opening the Black Sea." Such a campaign would require "at least 150,000 men," and with this consideration in mind, Simmons "pointed out the advantages of the peninsula containing Mount Athos bounded on the North by Besik Gol extending from Salonica to the Gulf of Orfano - space to collect any amount of force - splendid harbours, easily defensible, near the scene of action - a Greek population who would probably be favourable to us, close to the scene of future action."

Thus, a cursory appraisal of the situation by Napier and Simmons had resulted in a wide choice of strategic points - Lemnos, Imbros, Mitylene, Acre, Salonica, Smyrna, Scanderoon and Stampalia - as well as Crete, Egypt, Gallipoli and the

Persian Gulf, information about which over the next two weeks was provided in reports and memoranda by Colonel Home and the Intelligence Branch,[109] and by the Hydrographer's Department at the Admiralty. But whatever the individual merits of each of these points (as war anchorages, concentration areas or intermediate bases), no selection could be made at all so long as the Cabinet remained divided over the principle of occupation, and no priority established in terms of strategic importance so long as their functions in relation to a war policy remained undefined: and this became painfully evident at the military conference on 5 March and the Cabinets on 7 and 8 March. "Another long Conference with the 2 Genls., and Mr. Secy. Hardy...to receive their reports as to movements if required, of various kinds," Beaconsfield afterwards wrote the Queen, "Lord B. was in hopes he might have proposed definite, and definitive, measures, tomorrow, to the Cabinet, but that is not the case. The Genls. are very critical and very cautious in accepting or adopting any resolution. This is natural, and must be tolerated and indulged. It is not desirable to bring measures before the Cabinet on which their opinion is not distinctly asked: otherwise the deliberations degenerate into mere gossip, and opportunity is often taken to rescind or retreat from the decisions already made...."[110] Thus, before the Generals

109. Home to Napier, 4 March 1878, Memoranda on Russia and Turkey, 1877-8, bound vol., 'Napier of Magdala: Records of Chief Commands, 1876-83,' Napier Family Papers.

110. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 5 March 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/495; Beaconsfield to Hardy, 4 March 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/266.

could proceed with detailed planning, the Cabinet had first to be brought to accept the principle of occupation and to lay down certain bases of action in the event of war.

Beaconsfield no longer believed that Derby, personally committed to a policy of passive obstructionism, constituted a serious obstacle to debate and decision; the Cabinet had "taken the management of the Foreign Office into its own hands" and Derby's criticisms had a healthy stimulative effect on discussion.[111] But the situation was made manifestly more urgent and complicated by the Russian occupation of San Stephano, by Hornby's fears as to the fate of the Turkish fleet and Layard's accounts of the gravity of the Russian peace terms for Britain's Asiatic interests, and by the Queen's insistence that the Duke of Cambridge (or alternatively the Duke of Connaught) be allowed to attend Cabinet meetings. The Duke of Cambridge, noting his exclusion from the military conferences, had vainly remonstrated to Hardy that unless he was "made aware of all that is said or that passes with regard to military operations," he could not be held responsible for the military efficiency of the country.[112] He had appealed to the Queen who in turn had urged upon Beaconsfield "the utmost importance, indeed imperative, that he, the Duke of Cambridge (as Lord Lyons did) should be occasionally present at the Cabinet for, quite unlike former times, when the C.-in-Chief, and also the Master Genl of the Ordnance used to be in the Cabinet, there

111. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, secret, 6 and 8 March 1878, ibid, B/XIX/C/496 and 498.

112. Cambridge to Hardy, pte, 5 March 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/273.

is not one high Naval or Military man in the Cabinet, and unless the C.-in-Chief knows personally (and not only 2nd hand) what passes on Military proposals, it is impossible for him to know what exactly is required. And we must be prepared. Pray let him attend. He can be entirely relied upon...."[113] Beaconsfield replied with evasive correctness that "nothing yet has taken place in the Cabinet which required the presence or counsel of H.R.H."[114] While the Duke's attendance at Cabinet meetings would not be technically unconstitutional or in principle unwise, it would be looked upon as a retrograde step in the movement towards unfettered Ministerial responsibility for which Cardwell had fought so hard and technically established. Because of the Duke's German connections, it was feared that he might compromise what little Cabinet security had been left after Derby's indiscretions. Moreover, Beaconsfield had ample and competent advisers in Napier, Wolseley, Simmons and Home; and the Duke, largely redundant, would be apt to meddle and provoke that inconclusive discussion which Beaconsfield wished to avoid. An immediate Cabinet decision as to the seizure of a Turkish island or coastal base was therefore necessary: but it was not easy to find.

At an "exciting" meeting of the Cabinet on 7 March, unexpected opposition arose from the War Minister who argued that the naval and military authorities would not condone "such frittering away of force" as would be involved in the occupation of a series of strategic points before a clear

113. Queen Victoria to Beaconsfield, 8 March 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/499.

114. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 8 March 1878, ibid, B/XIX/C/501.

and general military policy "as to what we would or would not do - or assent to" had been previously laid down. Without such a broad directing policy, the occupation of strategic points would not be "of significance;" there would be "nothing real about it;" and it could not lead to any "present or future advantages."[115] Beaconsfield, supported by Cairns and Salisbury, pressed hard for immediate occupation; there followed "much discussion" in the sense "that 'something' was to be done;" but Northcote, Cross, Smith and Manners, "full of misgivings" remained undecided and the Cabinet adjourned until the following day.[116]

The impasse was but slightly relieved by fresh news from Hornby that for the security of the Fleet in the Sea of Marmara and the conduct of operations in the Black Sea, an alliance with Turkey and an occupation of Gallipoli, as he had previously advocated, were no longer imperative; that after having reconnoitred the Dardanelles and Bosphorus, he felt he could force them both (even though armed with torpedoes) without crippling loss; and that, "by running Colliers at night through the Bosphorus," and expropriating merchant coal supplies (as later recommended by the War Office) he could "maintain the fleet in an efficient state on the Black Sea...for the purpose of keeping the Sea against all the forces the Russians could bring against" him.[117] If the object in seizing a Turkish island was merely to provide

115. Private diary, 8 March 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

116. Ibid.

117. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 8 March 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/498; Smith to Hornby, secret and confdl, 23 March 1878, 'Letters of W.H.Smith, 1878,' Hornby Papers, PHI/115.

a counter-poise against a Russian occupation of Constantinople and Gallipoli from which to blockade the Dardanelles, there now seemed time to reconsider and perhaps indefinitely postpone the whole question; but the Admiralty, and the First Lord in particular, while appreciating the important part that British naval operations in the Black Sea would play in a war against Russia, were keenly anxious about reports of Russian torpedoes at the Bosphorus and in the Black Sea, and refused to associate themselves with the optimism of Hornby's report until more specific information was available.[118] Moreover, it was now becoming demonstrably clear that an island or coastal base would be used for purposes other than blockade. Accordingly, at the Cabinet of 8 March, "in order to pledge the Cabinet to a positive policy, and to have no further debate on the point," it was agreed, "in principle, if not in time and place," that in the event of any Russo-Turkish treaty "compromising the maritime interests of Great Britain in the Mediterranean, a new naval station in the East of the Mediterranean must be obtained, and if necessary by force."[119] Nevertheless, as Hardy observed, the "principles" of war policy had yet to be laid down, for it was "no use" entering either the proposed Congress or war "unless we know what we can and what we cannot do."[120]

In spite of the arrogance of San Stephano, Beaconsfield

118. Smith to Hornby, dft, 28 February 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6; same to same, pte, 21 March 1878, 'Letters of W.H.Smith,' Hornby Papers, PHI/118; Wellesley to Hornby, 23 March 1878, ibid.

119. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 8 March 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/501.

120. Private diary, 9 March 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

believed the occasion was yet premature to consider a general war policy and that there was sufficient secret evidence to suggest that by the judicious employment of military demonstrations of a specific and limited character huge diplomatic objects could be gained; that Russia so confronted with the seeming inevitability of war with Britain would recede from her combustible position before Constantinople and consent to a complete recasting of San Stephano. By all accounts, the Russian armies south of the Balkans were "in a baddish way."[121] In terms of military strength, the balance was steadily tipping in favour of the Turks. The estimates of the British military attaches and consuls agreed with those of the War Office, independently arrived at from German sources, in putting the Russian strength at approximately 100,000; but this number was rapidly wasting away through "fatigue, exposure to cold, insufficient covering, the use and abuse of bad spirits and salt fish" and typhus.[122] "Large numbers" of Russian troops were "in rags and without shoes." "They are in a pitiable state," wrote Fife.[123] They are in fact, confirmed Wellesley, "unfit at the present moment

121. Private diary, 19 March 1878, ibid.

122. Layard to Derby, no.260, 20 February; no.269, 22 February; no.294, 1 March 1878, PRO/FO 78/2780; no.321, 6 March; no.341, 13 March 1878, PRO/FO 78/2781; no.380, 20 March; no.434, 29 March 1878, PRO/FO 78/2782; 'Confidential Memorandum: Strength and Distribution of the Russian Forces South of the Balkans at the present date,' J. Maurice, 6 March 1878, WOP, W22; Wellesley to Derby, no.279, 26 February 1878, PRO/FO 65/1000.

123. Fife to Dickson, no.126, 11 March 1878, encl. in Layard to Derby, no.385, 20 March 1878, PRO/FO 78/2782.

to enter on another campaign."[124] Stretched to the limit of their supply lines of communication, threatened by a insurrection in the Rhodope (allegedly led by an eccentric Englishman, a Colonel St.Clair), racked by disease and the drunken indiscipline that usually accompanies the enforced activity which comes at the end of a hard-fought but incompletely fulfilled campaign, the Russian armies watched with growing apprehension the increasing military consolidation of the Turks,[125] Hornby's fleet riding like "a chained watch-dog" off Prince's Island, and the increasingly hostile disposition of Austria and England. "According to all the intelligence we received," wrote Pfeil, "an army of from 180,000 to 200,000 men was at that time collected round the capital, and an occupation of Constantinople or the capture of the positions commanding the Bosporus, and therefore the entrance to the Black Sea, had long since become an impossibility for us. The Black Sea was open to the Anglo-Turkish fleet, which thus, in the event of war, was in a position easily to cut off our communications with home."[126] All this convinced Beaconsfield that "we must act...with great decision."[127]

At the military conference to discuss "plans and policy" on 15 March, between Beaconsfield, Hardy, the Duke of Cambridge, Ellice and Simmons, it was decided to pursue

124. Wellesley to Derby, no.325, secret, 18 March 1878, PRO/FO 65/1000.

125. Layard to Beaconsfield, pte and secret, 20 March 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/L/140; same to Salisbury, 28 April 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

126. Pfeil, Experiences, p.326.

127. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 18 March 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/507.

the investigations of practically all the suggested strategic points.[128] The War Office and Admiralty produced a fresh crop of memoranda: and in the Aegean local naval reconnaissances were undertaken.[129] The Duke of Cambridge insisted on completing preparations for two army corps so we could "put on a bold front" at the Congress and make "our foes... think twice or even thrice before they involved themselves in a great contest with our combined Military and Naval Forces."[130] The Cabinet on 16 March discussed "corps d'armee, new Gibralters and expeditions from India" in "great fulness;"[131] and five days later, after discussions with Colonel Home, Salisbury proposed the permanent annexation of "two naval stations for England - say Lemnos or Cyprus, with an occupation, at least temporary, of some place like Scanderoon for the sake of moral effect," at the same time arranging for a personal reconnaissance to be made at Scanderoon by Lt. Hare, R.E.[132]

The pretext for implementing these measures arrived with the formal submission of the Treaty of San Stephano on 23 March; and with the "categorical refusal" of the Russians the following day to accept the British conditions for entry

128. Hardy to Beaconsfield, 14 March 1878, ibid, B/XX/Ha/156.

129. Cambridge to Hardy, 14 March 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/273.

130. Same to same, 16 March 1878, ibid.

131. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 16 March 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/506.

132. Salisbury to Beaconsfield, confdl, 21 March 1878, ibid, B/XX/Ce/233; Salisbury to Home, 20 and 21 March 1878, loose papers, Salisbury Papers; Cambridge to Hardy, 21 March 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/273.

into the Congress. In a set speech read to the "fateful" Cabinet of 27 March which was climaxed by Derby's resignation, Beaconsfield set out in clear and unmistakeable terms the limited emergency policy and programme he had outlined the day before to the Queen.[133] Neither peace nor the Empire could any longer be maintained by drifting. All previous attempts at moderation and neutrality and the studious avoidance of provocation and collision had "lessened our influence, and caused it to be thought that we had no power." At the same time, the ravaged condition of her armies made Russia's position critical. A policy of boldness would "secure peace; one of conciliation end in war." He would immediately call out the Reserves which he believed would "place immediately at our command two army corps;" he would direct the Indian Government to send an expedition to occupy Cyprus and Scanderoon, the keys of Asia, to "command the Persian Gulf and all the country round Bagdad" and "entirely neutralise the Russian conquests and influence in Armenia." These views were strongly supported by Cairns and Salisbury. The Lord Chancellor spoke of the "great and grave emergency" and of the necessity of acquiring some counter-poise to the Russian position in Armenia which would re-establish or confirm our influence in the East. The Indian Secretary dwelt particularly upon the advantages of occupying Scanderoon: it commanded the vital routes to the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf; it offered the least offense to France of any occupation proposed; it would maintain "our influence over the Asiatic populations;" it was more urgent than the question of Cyprus

133. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, secret, 26 March 1878, ibid, B/XIX/C/509,510 and 511.

and should be acted on at once. With the exception of Derby, the remainder of the Cabinet murmured a vague approbation.

It should be remembered that these measures were not proposed exclusively nor even mainly with war against Russia in mind, but rather to correct the balance of Asiatic influence that had been purportedly upset by Russia's conquests in Armenia and, as the Queen perceived, "very possibly prevent a general war."[134] They were defensive rather than offensive in character and more in the way of demonstrations than bona-fide preparations. The mustering of the Reserves, in the context of Continental warfare a dramatic phrase connoting huge manpower resources, was in terms of Britain's reformed army essentially and almost ludicrously fictitious: the completion of two army corps was more ostensible than real; for although 34,794 men were realised, they could not be maintained in action without the full embodiment of the Militia and the Volunteers - provisions for which no allowance had been made.[135] The Indian Contingent, though complete in itself and expeditiously despatched from India by Lytton and Temple, was but a token force without any clear destination,[136]

134. Queen Victoria to Beaconsfield, secret, 27 March 1878, ibid, B/XIX/B/1241.

135. WO Confdl Paper 0722, 'Report from the Committee on Mobilisation,' 17 December 1878; 'Report on the general result of the Mobilisation of the 1st Class Army Reserve and Militia Reserve in April 1878,' WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0738, pp.173-5, WOP; private diary, 29 March 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

136. Lytton to Temple, pte and confdl, 30 March; pte and very secret, 1 April 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/3; Temple Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.F.86/5.

and "was necessary," Salisbury explained to the Duke of Cambridge, "clearly to impress Europe with the groundless character of our resources."[137] It is also significant to note that these measures had been largely defined by Beaconsfield, Cairns and Salisbury while Hardy and his military advisers, who questioned their military usefulness, remained distant and slightly disgruntled observers.[138] Indeed, when pressed by the Queen to produce "Lord Napier's plans and the Admiralty preparations,"[139] Beaconsfield was forced to admit that, because he had laid down no contingencies, they were "very meagre" and "not very encouraging or instructive."[140]

While the search for a strategic base at the east end of the Mediterranean constituted a major strand of Salisbury's policy over the next three months, culminating in the Anglo-Turkish Convention, the need for a war policy was now both obvious and imminent. There was no lack of suggestions. Bluhm Pasha, the anglophile Prussian engineer in the Turkish service, submitted at least two memoranda on "the measures to be taken by England in case a war with Russia was imminent" and on his "reflexions sur le plan de Campagne a adopte pour la Guerre eventuelle contre la

137. Cambridge to Hardy, pte, 12 April 1878; Salisbury to Hardy, 13 April 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/273 and 267.

138. Private diary, 30 March 1878, ibid, T501/11.

139. Queen Victoria to Beaconsfield, confdl, 24 and 25 March 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/B/1232 and 1234; Beaconsfield to Hardy, 22 March 1878; Cambridge to Hardy, confdl, 22 March 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/266 and 273.

140. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, secret, 27 March 1878, ibid, B/XIX/C/511.

Russie."[141] Prussian staff "studies on the probable course and result of a war between Russia and England" were translated and circulated by the Intelligence Branch, various members of which, notably Fraser and Ross of Bladensburg, produced studies of their own.[142] But the two most important and most representative of War Office thinking were an unofficial and unsolicited memorandum by Wolseley on "Preparing for War with Russia"[143] (described by Napier as "a very wild paper, which will diminish confidence in him"[144]), and an official submission of uncertain authorship (but undoubtedly by Colonel Home) dealing with four hypothetical contingencies suggested by the Cabinet, the most realistic of which envisaged England at war without allies.[145]

In this, the darkest possible case, Home believed that Russia's military position, in control of the Bosphorus, Dardanelles, the Turkish arsenals, Navy and merchant fleet, and subsidised by indemnities would be one of such unassailable strength that it would be impossible for Britain "with such army as we possess or are ever likely to have...to throw a

141. Layard to Derby, no.381, 20 March 1878, PRO/FO 78/2782; same to Salisbury, no.505, 17 April 1878, PRO/FO 78/2784.

142. 'Studies on the Probable Course and Result of a War between Russia and England,' Lt.-General von Hanneken, April 1878, WOP; Fraser to Hornby, 4 April 1878, 'Letters from Ambassadors etc...,' Hornby Papers, PHI/119.

143. 'Memorandum on Preparing for War with Russia,' G.J.Wolseley, 30 March 1878, WOP, W35.

144. Napier to Lady Napier, 5 April 1878, Napier Family Papers.

145. 'Four Cases - On the Supposition of England at War with Russia,' R.Home, March 1878, WOP, W22; a copy of this memorandum, attributed to Simmons, is to be found in the Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/3.

force ashore in Turkey and turn Russia out." Of course, the Navy could blockade the Baltic, the North Sea ports and the Dardanelles; and it might be possible to seize and destroy Russian settlements and naval stations on the North Pacific coast, Vladivostok and Petropaulovsky for example, with expeditions sent from India. But these, as von Hanneken later pointed out, would be largely peripheral operations and would not "exercise any appreciable influence on Russia." In Central Asia, Russia would probably declare a holy war, stir up revolt in India and provoke an Afghan war (supported by Russian money and promises though little else). Britain might retaliate with similar measures inciting revolt and mutiny; but Russian regular troops in Central Asia were so few (30,000); the spaces so vast; the possible damage to Russia so negligible while the dangers of weakening our hold on India so great, that Home deemed an expedition to Central Asia "a measure of very doubtful policy." A "very small force" might be sent to Bushire to coerce Persia, but "for us to send an army from the Indus to Khiva, a distance of 1400 miles, for the purpose of driving the Russians out of a country the possession of which so long as their military force is all massed in Europe, or on the shores of the Black Sea, appears to be a questionable step. Russia would simply fall back and be militarily speaking all the stronger for it and our enormous lines of communication would be so difficult to maintain that a very trifling check would seriously compromise our army." British policy should therefore confine itself to occupying Mitylene and Lemnos, to encouraging a Greek annexation of Crete to counter and eventually supplant Slav influence at Constantinople, and to waiting to take

advantage of the political disturbances that would shortly and infallibly break out in Roumania, Servia and Montenegro. "If then we have to fight Russia without allies," concluded Home, "a naval war, the seizure of Mitylene and Lemnos, the maintenance of a field force at those Islands as a menace to Russia, the encouragement and aggrandisement of Greece, and the consequent pressure put on Russia to keep a large army permanently in Turkey would appear to be our best policy. Watch and wait until the existing political state of Europe alters which it is sure to do, should then be our policy."

In almost every respect, Wolseley differed from Home. It is true that they were agreed that the basis of Britain's war policy should be maritime (blockade, the protection of the Colonies and coaling stations against Russian privateers and the destruction of enemy commerce) and that since these operations were slow to produce effect a waiting period would necessarily ensue; but here agreement ended. For while Home believed that maritime operations would of themselves bring about inexorable changes in the political structure of Europe which could be turned to advantage, Wolseley believed that these changes should be precipitated "by descending upon some one of her exposed points in superior numbers." Far from being militarily unassailable, Russia was essentially weak; its vast size, extensive sea-board, rudimentary inland communications and subject populations made it susceptible to attack at its extremities by any power that had command of the sea. The need to retain substantial garrisons in the Baltic, Poland, Gallicia, Caucasus, Bessarabia and Turkestan completely exhausted Russia's capacity "for offensive

operations, whilst the maintenance of these armies on a war footing - many of them at the extremities of the Empire - would be ruinous to her finances." At the same time, on the basis of what we had accomplished during the Napoleonic War and what the Northern States had more recently accomplished during the Civil War, it was erroneous to suppose that Britain could not field "a very large army" capable of matching that of Russia. There were over three-quarters of a million martially-inclined Volunteers who could be commanded by retired purchase and militia officers; foreign contingents could be raised in Turkey (100,000), Egypt and Tunis (20,000), Morocco (5,000), Albania (10,000); the Indian Army could provide 30,000 native troops for European service; General MacDougall, who was leaving for Canada to command the troops in British North America, could arrange for the provision of a Canadian Contingent of 10,000 men; while the best means of raising the regular army to 100,000 men "should be considered at once by a committee of officers." After increasing the garrisons of Malta and Gibralter and establishing depots at Mitylene or Crete, 10,000 troops should be sent from Aldershot to land or threaten to land at Riga, Reval and Sweaburg, thereby forcing "the retention of a considerable Russian Army in the Baltic provinces." In Central Asia, Wolseley, unlike Home, believed without qualification that the Amir of Afghanistan could be induced to spear-head a general rising in the Khanates which, backed by 10,000 British-Indian shock troops striking from Peshawur to Tashkent, would "destroy the power and prestige of Russia in Central Asia" as he had outlined in an earlier memorandum. Wolseley envisaged no operations in the Pacific; rather "the first

great object to be aimed at is our naval supremacy in the Black Sea." This would permit of the decisive battles being fought in Bulgaria as Simmons and Bluhm Pasha foresaw with large British armies, probably operating in conjunction with Austrian, Roumanian and Turkish allies, landing in the Gulf of Xeros, at Salonica, at Rodosto or Pivotos in the Sea of Marmara, or at Varna in the Dobrudscha. But it would first be necessary to secure the Dardanelles by seizing the Bulair lines in rear, landing one army corps at Besika Bay and occupying the Asiatic forts.

The most salient features of these plans - maritime warfare, the creation of a huge imperial and mercenary army, and its objectives in the Baltic, Black Sea, Central Asia and Pacific - bear further comment since over the next three months they formed a basis of preparation no matter how shadowy, haphazard and incomplete. Clearly, as the Admiralty, War Office, Foreign Office and India Office pointed out, the most urgent need before any specific project for military or naval operations against Russia could be drawn up was for reliable and detailed intelligence concerning the strength and dispositions of the Russian armies and fleets.[146] The need for intelligence was especially great concerning the Russian Baltic and Pacific military districts, naval stations and coastal defence as evidenced by the single War Office report "on the shores of the North-West Pacific,"[147] and the

146. Smith to Derby, confdl, 27 February 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6/36; Minute by Currie, 21 January 1878, on Derby to Layard, dft, no.58, 13 January 1878, PRO/FO 78/2765; Salisbury to Layard, dft tlgm, secret, 16 May 1878, PRO/FO 78/2768.

147. WO Paper, 'The Shores of the North West Pacific with an Account of the Russian Advances in that Region,' March 1878, WOP, W22.

startling reception of Colomb's lecture before the R.U.S.I. on "Russian Development and our Naval and Military Position in the North Pacific."[148] "At the present moment," Smith wrote to Derby, "we know very little indeed as to the work which may be on hand in the Baltic and Black Sea and still less as to...the Amoor or at Vladivostok."[149] In Central Asia, Lytton could not penetrate the veil of Afghan intransigence; while on the Bosphorus, Dickson's and Fife's reports were exaggerated by Wolseley as being "monstrously meagre, unsatisfactory...and almost useless."[150] It was generally urged that the Consular Agents in Turkey, Russia, Roumania and Poland be charged with the collection of military and naval intelligence; and it was largely upon this source, supplemented by the military attaches' despatches, Mitchell's analyses of the Russian Press, and independent memoranda concerning combined operations against the Baltic and North Sea bases, Finland and St.Petersburg, from loyal expatriates and former military officers now residing in Russia (such as Captains E.F.Law and Charles Noedt) that the War Office and Admiralty relied in the shaping of their projects.[151]

The most worrisome problems harassing the Admiralty

148. Capt. J.C.R.Colomb, "Russian Development and our Naval and Military Position in the North Pacific,' J.R.U.S.I., XXI, May 1877, pp.659-707.

149. Smith to Derby, confdl, 27 February 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6/36.

150. 'Memorandum on Preparing for War with Russia,' G.J. Wolseley, 30 March 1878, WOP, W35.

151. Wellesley to Smith, most secret, 22 April 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6; same to Derby, no.320, secret, 19 March; no.561, secret, 22 May; no.587, secret, 5 June 1878, PRO/FO 65/1000,1002 and 1004.

were not those concerned with offensive maritime warfare - blockade, the destruction of Russian commerce or the conduct of naval raids upon Russian coastal fortifications or towns - (which, as von Hanneken perceived, in view of Russia's insignificant battle fleet, negligible merchant marine, internal economic self-sufficiency and trade by rail with Germany, would have no "direct or decisive" bearing on the outcome of war and would be a waste of Royal Navy ships[152]), but those concerned with the threat of Russian privateers operating against British commerce, undefended coaling stations and colonial harbours in the manner elaborated by Admirals Lessovsky and Popov during the American Civil War. As early as November 1876, the Russian Admiralty had instituted a search for Lessovsky's plans for privateering warfare in its American Legation archives; in December 1877, the Tsar had appointed a special commission to investigate the possibilities of Russia's buying, equipping and arming cruisers in the United States for commerce warfare; and on 13 April, Captain L.V. Semetchkin, an original member of Lessovsky's expedition and presently naval representative to the Philadelphia Exposition, sailed from Port Baltic in great secrecy, together with a shadow crew of 66 officers and 600 men, on board a German ship "Cimbria" to negociate the purchase of three or four privateering cruisers.[153] It is a tribute to the acuity of the British consuls in the German North Sea ports that all these developments should have been observed and reported on

152. 'Studies etc...,' von Hanneken, April 1878, WOP.

153. L.I.Strakhovsky, "Russia's Privateering Projects of 1878," Journal of Modern History, 1935, vol.7, pp.22-40.

and that as early as 27 March, Loftus had warned his Government of Russian intentions "to prey on English commerce, more especially in the Pacific and China Seas" with San Francisco as the base of operations.[154] In England, the Admiralty's attention was further rivetted to this alarum by the activities of Captains Pym, Colomb and Cooper Key in Parliament, the Press and the R.U.S.I. where the defenceless condition of British Pacific commerce, the absence of a British naval base on the Canadian Pacific coast as a counter-poise to San Francisco and the inability of the Pacific Squadron to concentrate sufficiently quickly for action were paraded before the professional public.[155] The character and urgency of the threat, as well as the authority of professional and public concern, was yet further emphasised by the anxious despatches of the local colonial administrators and naval and military commanders abroad. Admiral Algernon de Horsey, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, stressed the defenceless condition of Esquimault and urged upon the Admiralty its conversion into the "future, and only, base of naval operations in the Pacific" for "Imperial reasons." "We have no British foothold nearer than the Falkland Islands in the Atlantic!," he wrote, "if I except Fiji or the Australian station. Our want of Esquimault is imperative."[156] Admiral Sir E.A.Inglefield and Sir John Glover, Governor of Newfoundland, similarly emphasised the "utterly and entirely defenceless" state of St. John's, Halifax

154. Loftus to Salisbury, no.361, confdl, 27 March; no.389, secret, 8 April; no.406, 10 April 1878, PRO/FO 65/1001; no.435, secret, 17 April 1878, PRO/FO 65/1002.

155. Hansard, CCXXXIX, 1878, cc.1369-70.

156. Admiral Algernon de Horsey to Smith, confdl, 29 June 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6/119.

and the Canadian Maritime Provinces;[157] Admirals Milne and Cooper Key, Bermuda and the West Indies;[158] Sir Theophilus Shepstone, Sir Arthur Cunynghame and Sir Bartle Frere, the Cape and Simon's Town;[159] Lytton and the Duke of Buckingham, Governor of Madras, the coasts and sea-ports of India.[160] Finally, the seriousness of the crisis was made inescapably clear on 4 April by the secret and confidential report of the Colonial Defence Committee (consisting of Simmons, Admiral A.Milne and Mr. Barkley and appointed in early March to investigate and propose measures for the temporary emergency defence of the Cape, Mauritius, Ceylon, Singapore and Hong Kong) that of a necessary 200 guns and Whitehead torpedoes, only thirty-five to forty 6½ ton guns mounted in naval carriages were available for colonial defence and that these would provide an imperfect defence against two or three unarmoured Russian cruisers firing at long ranges.[161]

Several counter-measures were proposed to meet the emergency in the defence of coaling stations and the destruction

157. Admiral E.A.Inglefield to Smith, pte, 11 May 1878, ibid, PS6/104.

158. Milne to Smith, 11 August 1879, ibid.

159. Carnarvon Papers, PRO/30/6/122.

160. Buckingham to Hardy, pte, 6 April 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/104; Lytton to Hardy, 10 April 1878, ibid, T501/74; 'Confidential Memorandum on the Protection of the Principal Seaports on the West and East coasts of the Presidency,' Gen. Sir N.Chamberlain, 21 April 1878, nos.1090,1136,1137, IMP, vol.1183; R-Admiral J.Corbett to Smith, 28 January 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6/12.

161. 'Secret and Confidential Report of a Colonial Defence Committee on the Temporary Defences of the Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, Ceylon, Singapore and Hong Kong, 4 April 1878,' Carnarvon Papers, PRO/30/6/124.

of Russian commerce raiders; but few were adopted. The Colonial Defence Committee made extensive recommendations concerning the development of land and sea armaments, the raising of local militias and the provision of local naval defence by the Royal Navy.[162] Admiral Sir William King Hall "very apprehensive as to the mischief which may be done by Russo-American armed cruisers directly the Russian Government have decided on war with this country" urged "a redistribution of our present ships to deal effectively with the Russian cruisers on the East and West of America" - the "Warrior," "Achilles" and "Black Prince," unsheathed but with superior speed and coal-carrying capacities than the "Cimbria," being based on Bermuda; the "Emerald" and "Garnet" in the Malacca Straits; and the "Raleigh," "Inconstant," "Boadecea" and "Eurylas," sheathed and therefore independent of dock accommodation, in the Pacific.[163] Sir Donald Currie and Mr. Barnaby, the Navy Constructor, vigorously supported by the First Sea Lord, persistently urged the arming, equipping and conversion of thirty fast steamers as cruisers.[164] But the Cabinet and the First Lord, largely upon the advice of the British Minister in Washington, Sir Edward Thornton, and his naval attache, Rear-Admiral W.Gore-Jones, that they had failed "to discover any purchases actually made;" that the Russian Consul-General had assured them that there was "nothing in the rumour" of plans and preparations for American-based privateering in the event of war; and that even after the "great excitement"

162. Ibid.

163. Admiral Sir William King Hall to Smith, 10 May 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6/97.

164. Currie to Smith, pte, 18 March 1878, ibid, PS6/53.

of Semetchkin's arrival with an alleged four million dollars for the purchase of fast steamers and the readiness of "every shipowner in the Country...to sell" they did "not believe one dollar has been spent or one vessel changed hands," refused to take the alarm seriously or to move in any of the recommended directions.[165] It was felt financially impossible and strategically and physically impracticable (in terms of numbers of ships) "to defend every local position" on the route to India.[166] There were insufficient guns to arm both the Reserve Fleet and the coaling stations. The redistribution of the fleets was considered premature;[167] while, as Currie later told the R.U.S.I., no arrangements were made "for testing the efficiency of merchant ships in carrying guns, or to act as cruisers in the event of war."[168] Thus it would appear that at least in the early stages of a war with Russia the Admiralty would have been singularly unprepared to cope with the problems of maritime warfare which formed the foundations of Home's and Wolseley's war policies.

The creation of large imperial and mercenary armies posed problems of an altogether different sort. On the British aspects of military organisation, Home was undoubtedly a more qualified judge than Wolseley: he appreciated that over 100,000 recruits would be required in the first year of war to complete and sustain two army corps in action, maintain the Militia as a reserve and provide drafts for Indian and

165. Gore-Jones to Smith, pte, 16 and 23 April, 14 May 1878, ibid, PS6/80,88,106.

166. Milne to Smith, 11 August 1879, ibid, PS6/145.

167. Smith to Gifford, 14 May 1878, ibid, PS6/99.

168. Remarks by Sir D.Currie on J.C.R.Colomb, "The Naval and Military Resources of the Colonies," J.R.U.S.I., XXIII, March 1879, p.473.

Colonial service; and that the Militia and Volunteers, as established parts of the armed forces, were technically limited to the defence of the United Kingdom and could not be used for expeditionary purposes. Nevertheless, the tendency during the Crimean War to supplement the expeditionary armies with German, Swiss and Italian mercenaries had been largely superceded by the movement towards an "imperial scheme of mutual defence" by which "heterogeneous bodies" of Colonial troops could be brought "into something like a cohesive force" in the defence of Imperial interests:[169] there were independent offers of service from Canadian and Turkish regiments and the armies of the Indian Native Princes; MacDougall managed to convince the Canadian Government to assist in the formation of a Canadian Contingent if one were requested (although the Commander-in-Chief, Canadian Militia, Maj.-General Sir Edward Selby-Smith objected that the withdrawal of troops from Canada during war would bring the "strong probability of trouble arising on the Canadian Frontier by invasion by Fenians incited by Russian emissaries...who are, and have been, for many months back, drilling and organising in bands, numbering in the alleged aggregate tens of thousands in every populous city in New England and the bordering States"[170]); while Colonel H.C.Fletcher, a keen student of North American warfare, in a special lecture before the R.U.S.I. timed to coincide with the calling out of the Reserves, showed how best these massive volunteer armies

169. Colonel H.C.Fletcher, "A Volunteer Force, British and Colonial in the event of War," ibid, XXI, May 1877, pp.633-58.

170. 'Papers on the Proposal to raise a Canadian Contingent for War,' PRO/WO 32/120.

could be employed.[171] But huge complications of a practical kind had been raised to which little thought or study had previously been given: questions of assimilation in arms, equipment, training and tactics; of reconciliation of national differences and the various levels of military efficiency to produce a truly cohesive force; of supply and transport, and of command and control. Only the American Civil War provided, as Wolseley and Fletcher pointed out, recent experience in the raising, command and employment of huge volunteer armies; but this aspect of the war, as indeed the war as a whole, had been insufficiently or imperfectly studied; and there were few commanders, in Britain or India, fitted by experience or study to grapple with such problems on the scale envisaged by Wolseley. Moreover, where were these armies to be employed with decisive effect? Amphibious operations against the North Pacific sea-board would have negligible influence, no matter how far the expeditionary armies penetrated inland. Colonel Home had already emphasised the ineffectiveness of operations in Central Asia; and Lytton himself, anxious about the condition of the Indian armies, was inflexibly opposed to the use of large forces which might embroil him in a subsidiary and wasteful Afghan war. Although Fraser told Hornby that Simmons had been selected to command a Baltic expedition, a Reserve Fleet for which having been collected at Spithead,[172] it was clear from

171. Colonel H.C.Fletcher, "On the Employment of the Reserve Forces in case of an Expeditionary Force being sent Abroad," J.R.U.S.I., XXII, March 1878, pp,350-68.

172. Fraser to Hornby, pte, 18 April 1878, 'Letters from Ambassadors etc...,' Hornby Papers, PHI/119.

Loftus's despatches that heavy coastal fortifications at the few available landing places, covered by the Baltic fleet and connected by rail to the garrisons of St.Petersburg, rendered any landing at Riga, Sweaburg or Cronstadt, or along the Finnish coast, a hazardous and unthinkable operation.[173] Clearly, Turkey presented the only possible theatre of operations, but one which was complicated by the imminent and virtual Russian command of Gallipoli and Constantinople, and the absence of a sufficiently large or close base for the concentration of large armies.

In a sense, the removal of these two restrictions became the principal strands of Salisbury's foreign policy which culminated two months later with the Schouvalov Agreements and the Anglo-Turkish Convention. But Salisbury's assumption of the Foreign Office seals was accompanied by a depreciation in the influence of the military experts, and, since no war policy had been adopted by the Cabinet, only inadvertently and probably unconsciously did these two aims have any real connection with warlike contingencies. Rather they were the diplomatic manoevres, backed by the limited military preparations that had been initiated by the Cabinet of 27 March, to hasten a settlement of the crisis. Indeed, Salisbury frankly subordinated the military question to the paramount importance of reaching a political agreement with Russia. Military views, Fraser told Hornby, were "not the fashion for the moment."[174]

173. Loftus to Derby, no.269, confdl, 28 February; nos.331 and 333, confdl, 19 March 1878, PRO/FO 65/1000; no.368, 27 March; no.378, 2 April; nos.405 and 408, secret, 10 April 1878, PRO/FO 65/1002.

174. Fraser to Hornby, 28 February 1878, 'Letters from Ambassadors etc...,' Hornby Papers, PHI/119.

Yet military complications did not cease to harass and exacerbate Salisbury's negociations. Todleben's shifting of his encampments towards Constantinople to improve the sanitary condition of his armies was suspiciously represented by Baker and Hornby to London as an attempt on the part of the Russians to gain key strategical positions as a prelude to the immediate seizure by Gourko and Scoboleff of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles on the outbreak of war and to provoke a collision with Turkey while the condition and strength of their armies still made possible an occupation of Constantinople.[175] Both Layard and Hornby therefore pressed Salisbury for authority to bring the Fleet from Ismid to Prinkipo (ostensibly for health reasons) but in fact to "encourage Turks in defending City and Bosphorus... and prevent a coup de main on either." These alarmist reports were discredited in London. Colonel Home believed that the strength and intentions ascribed to Todleben's armies had been purposely distorted to mislead Europe and Turkey and were in fact much exaggerated.[176] Salisbury was strongly opposed to moving the Fleet closer to Constantinople and precipitating the collision that it was in the interests of both Russia and England to avoid. "We have had so many cock and bull stories from out there," he wrote to Smith, as to make him suspect "they have Todleben on the brain."[177]

175. Layard to Salisbury, nos.481,483,486,488 and 489, secret, 17,18 and 19 May 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39144; 'Secret Memorandum,' Foreign Office to Admiralty, 20 May 1878, 'Preparations for War with Russia,' PRO/ADM/1/6455.

176. Home to Tenterden, 10 April 1878, copy in Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39137.

177. Salisbury to Smith, 26 June 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6/285F.

Even if Russia, in spite of assurances, made an unprovoked attack on Constantinople, "their perfidy would give to us a moral force here and in Europe, outweighing the possible strategical gain of a surprise." On the other hand, any British demonstration likely to encourage the Turks would probably forfeit the moral advantage "without the strategical position being assured."[178] "If Hornby is a cool-headed, fearless, sagacious man," Salisbury wrote Smith, "he ought to bring an action for libel against his epistolary style:"[179]

> The real answer to his reasoning is to imagine yourself Russian Minister of War corresponding with Todleben. Suppose Todleben was to argue to you that England was really bent on war - and was only negociating to gain time: and in proof were to point to the incessant preparations in our dockyards - the calling out of the reserves - the shipment of troops from India - the prohibition of the export of torpedoes - what reply would you have? Is not the argument as cogent in one direction as the other? I think Todleben really has more case than Hornby - because time is really for the purposes of attack much more valuable to us who are rich and unprepared than to Russia, exhausted and armed to the teeth. The truth is neither of us believe in the peaceful intentions of the other: and therefore, each, while negociating, is arming.

In spite of these diversions, Salisbury managed to extract from the ascendant Schouvalov political concessions which, while they did not entirely eliminate all possibility of future controversy, satisfied the basic British demands in their flexibility for amendment and in fact settled the broad pattern of the Congress: full freedom of action was retained over questions of the navigation of the Danube and

178. Salisbury to Layard, no.633, 19 May 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39144.

179. Salisbury to Smith, pte, 16 May 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6/108.

the Straits; while Bulgaria was to be pushed back from the Aegean and Macedonia and divided along the Balkan ridge, thereby securing to Turkey, at least in theory, most of the real strategical advantages of her former position. The War Office experts chosen to advise the British plenipotentiaries at the Congress were Simmons and Ardagh. Simmons' choice was obvious, and fittingly climaxed his long months as the Cabinet's unofficial military adviser. His special interest lay in the Balkans rather than Asia Minor, and he could be depended upon to put up a good fight. As an Engineer who had served on previous boundary commissions both in Turkey and North America, Simmons was familiar with all the apparatus and infighting that accompanied the delineation of frontiers; and it fell to him to fight persistently in detail and raise the secondary issues that slipped the amateur strategist's mind. His brusqueness and extremism, as well as his competence and industry, were well known to the Cabinet, although not always taken too seriously;[180] but as Fraser observed "his presence alone saved some of the frontier questions going much against us."[181] Ardagh perhaps, through his travels during and reports on the Servian War and through his association with Colonel Home's mission, possessed a more intimate knowledge of the topography of the Balkans than Simmons. He was personally known to Beaconsfield and had run several secret errands into Bulgaria for Salisbury during the Constantinople Conference.[182] Thus

180. Sumner, Russia and Balkans, p.522.

181. Fraser to Hornby, pte, n.d.(rec'd 2 August 1878), 'Letters from Ambassadors etc...,' Hornby Papers, PHI/119.

182. Ardagh Papers, PRO/30/40/1.

British military representation at the Congress, while not so pronounced as on other deputations, and stressing Balkan rather than Asiatic interests, was probably as authoritative as could be. Nevertheless, it was perhaps characteristic of Salisbury's ascendancy that the most qualified expert - Colonel Home - was not taken (although in fair compensation he was later appointed to lead the British delegation to the vital Bulgarian Frontier Delimitation Commission) and that Simmons "only knew the business 2 days before he started from England and by then it was all settled...."[183]

The military role was necessarily subordinate and confined to the ungrateful task of working out the details of the strategical rectification of the truncated Bulgarian boundary and the nature and extent of Turkish military control in Eastern Roumelia. Both Simmons and Ardagh contended, as did Lytton and Colley in India regarding the North-West Frontier, that in order to make the Balkan range a sound strategic barrier, affording means of active and passive defence, the frontier should be drawn at least "at cannon shot beyond the crest" where Turkey could command the northern or outer debouches and, as Hamley later pointed out, gain "the means for effecting reconnaissances for discerning the enemy's intended operations and plan of invasion" in the event of another war with Russia.[184] The Russian plan, urged by the formidable Colonel Bogulaboff, was "to place the

183. Fraser to Hornby, n.d., "Letters from Ambassadors etc...,' Hornby Papers, PHI/119.

184. WO Confdl Paper 0756, 'Memorandum on the New Turkish Frontier,' 'Memorandum on the Points of the Frontier between Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria which should be immediately reconnoitred with a view to making it a line of Defence,' E.B.Hamley, 25 August 1879, SSP; Shand, Hamley, I, pp.244-92.

Ottoman and Bulgarian forces face to face along the watershed" - the "logical inconsistency" of which, in Ardagh's opinion, was reinforced by Moltke's observation that the Balkan range was easier to defend from the north than from the south.[185] After much bitter and inconclusive wrangling, the dispute, along with those over the other rectified frontiers of Servia and Armenia, was referred for solution to a European Frontier Commission.

As head of the British delegation, both Home and his successor Hamley, the "so-called English Jomini,"[186] who was recalled from half-pay after his ideas of frontier defence, admirably and lucidly conveyed in a recent lecture before the R.U.S.I., had received wide attention, worked unsparingly to provide the Turks with a strategic frontier that could be defended in war until allied help arrived. Both forwarded plans of Turkish defensive operations in that event.[187] But in a sense their concern was academic and unreal. For as Ardagh perceived, there were "considerations of a special character" that affected the whole question of defence: how far the ethnological affinity of the Bulgarian populations on either side of the Balkan, and the influence of Russian intrigue among the armed forces of Eastern Roumelia, rendered an active Turkish defence difficult or impracticable; the negligence, procrastination or corruption of Turkish administration which might nullify

185. 'Secret and Confidential Memorandum: Delimitation of the Frontier of Bulgaria,' J.C.Ardagh, 1 March 1879, Ardagh Papers, PRO/30/40/1.

186. Ibid; WO Confdl Paper 0756, SSP.

187. Wolseley's Journal of the Khartoum Relief Expedition, PRO/WO 147/7.

or render inoperative the strategical advantages acquired through British efforts; the financial disability of the Porte to undertake costly fortifications; and finally, a repetition by the Turks of their failure to produce a sound plan of defensive strategy.[188] Most important of all, Britain had in effect abdicated all responsibility for the military defence of European Turkey and her policy - foreign, military and strategic - had assumed a direction that was more directly in the defence of India than of the Mediterranean.

The apprehensions of the War Office concerning a Russian demonstration towards India and Russian machinations on behalf of the Armenians to create "an autonomous Bulgaria in Central Asia,"[189] had emphasised the need for some defensive alliance with Turkey which, by committing all future British governments to a specific engagement independent of party feeling, would permanently counter all the advantages that Russia hoped to gain by the acquisition of Kars and Batoum. In Salisbury's opinion, the "mere presence of the Russians at Kars" would "cause Persia, Mesopotamia and Syria to turn their faces northward." Kars provided an advanced point on the high-road to Erzeroum from which in war new expeditions might start with a far greater presumption of success than any of the three previous invasions to which it had succumbed in the last half century; in peace it furnished "a convenient and easy base for the diplomatic

188. 'Secret and Confidential Memorandum etc...,' J.C.Ardagh, 1 March 1879, Ardagh Papers, PRO/30/40/1.

189. Layard to Beaconsfield, pte and secret, 20 March 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/L/140.

campaign by which Russian military expeditions are usually preceded." Morally, it would be a standing memorial to the completeness of the Turkish disgrace and an announcement to the populations of Syria and Mesopotamia that their days were numbered. The retention of Kars, Salisbury was convinced, would probably hasten the disintegration of the Turkish Empire and lead to a state of weakness which would offer strong temptation for fresh aggression to Russia, who, headed off in Europe, would not fail to take advantage, reduce the Porte to impotence, convert its provinces into Russian satrapies, and absorb "that which is its real strength - the magnificent Musselman material of its armies." It would establish a commanding influence over Syria, the river and land communications to the Persian Gulf and, "through the connection of Bagdad to Bombay," make our hold on India more difficult. "To us this prospect is serious:" and the antidote seemed to lie in "a defensive alliance with the Porte, undertaking to join in defending her Asiatic Empire from any attacks of Russia." But to give any strength or value to such an undertaking "some post in the Levant would be an absolute necessity." "It was absolutely and indispensably necessary that we should be nearer at hand than Malta," wrote Salisbury, "I have had ample opportunity during the past year of observing how utterly impossible efficient and prompt military action is from a port that is four days' sail from the scene of action. The first blows at least have always to be struck suddenly and secretly: and 4 days' notice - if there is to be a landing at the end of it - is almost fatal to military action."[190]

190. Salisbury to Layard, pte, 9 May 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39136.

In conformity with the Cabinet's decisions on 27 March, Salisbury had in correspondence with Layard on 17 April adverted to the possibility of "establishing ourselves at some strong place either on the Persian Gulf or the Aegean Coast," possibly, as he had pointed out to Beaconsfield, at Lemnos or Cyprus, but preferably at Scanderoon.[191] But all depended on the outcome of Hare's reconnaissance which was made known in a very garbled telegram on 17 April.[192] In interpreting the telegram to Beaconsfield, Home understood; firstly, that there were no military obstacles to the seizure of Scanderoon; secondly, that the fever season lasted from May to August, but was not very bad and could be eliminated by draining the local marshes; thirdly, that the "landing is at all times good and easy;" fourthly, that "troops may be landed uninfluenced by the malaria and seize the hills at the back;" fifthly, that it would be necessary to hold Sulina and Beila to defend the harbour and that both may be hold with a small force; sixthly, that fuel, water, labour and pack animals could "all be procured in abundance;" and finally, that the people were Arabs and "discontented with Turkish rule."[193] Probably because of the confused transmission of the telegram, Home did not submit an official report upon the relative advantages of holding Scanderoon or Cyprus until 8 and 11 June by which time Hare had returned and Salisbury, acting largely upon his own responsibility -

191. Same to same, pte, 17 April 1878, ibid.

192. Hare to Home, tlgm, 17 April 1878, Hughenden MSS, XVI/D/72b.

193. 'Memorandum on Alexandretta,' R.Home, 17 April 1878, ibid, XVI/D/72a.

and not that of Home, as claimed elsewhere,[194]- had already concluded an agreement with the Turks over Cyprus (4 June) of which Home was almost certainly ignorant. Certainly Salisbury, acting under extreme pressure to secure an ace should the cards go against Britain at the Congress, had given insufficient thought to the strategical implications of acquiring Cyprus. He confessed to Layard that it had "the naval advantage of vicinity both to Asia Minor and Syria;" and that "it would enable us without any act of overt hostility, and without disturbing the peace of Europe to accumulate materials of war and if requisite the troops necessary for operations in Asia Minor or Syria."[195] But, as Hare and Home observed, Alexandretta also possessed these advantages. Two special considerations, however, weighed in Salisbury's mind; its unhealthiness precluded immediate and temporary occupation - a vital prerequisite; while a prolonged occupation or annexation on the mainland would excite the jealousy of other powers, notably France and Italy. Cyprus, therefore, was "to be looked upon as a polite expression for Alexandretta, strategically: and that its value counts in this:"[196]

> That it gives us a second line of attack in case of Russia advancing Southward. Of course, the Black Sea will retain all its advantages; but we, being ex hypothesi, allies of Turkey, the Bosphorus will be our base for such operations. Alexandretta will be our base for collecting, arming, officering and supplying, the Asiatic populations whom we may hope

194. D.E.Lee, Great Britain and the Cyprus Convention Policy of 1878, Cambridge, H.U.P., 1934, p.77.

195. Salisbury to Layard, pte, 17 April, 2 and 9 May; pte and secret, 10 May 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39136.

196. Ibid; same to Northcote, 10 October 1878, Iddesleigh Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50019.

to bring up against Russia from the South and South West. We should attempt the same operations from Poti and Trebizond on the North and North West of her armies.

As certainly, Layard was greatly surprised with Salisbury's impetuous decision - or perhaps the rapidity of it - preferring Mohommerah, Mitylene or Alexandretta as better fitted more directly to secure the alternative route to India through Northern Syria and the Euphrates Valley which "must sooner or later become one of the great highways to India, first in connection with the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean; hereafter in connection with the line of rail through Southern Persia and Beloochistan." In any case, the issue should have been studied more closely from the military and naval, as well as from the political, point of view.[197] Only when Home realised that the concept of occupying Cyprus had become part of a wider diplomatic convention and had outgrown its original role, developed during the intoxicating days of March, as a temporary military base for operations in the Levant, did he reconsider, presumably after further talks with Hare, his evaluation of the strategic advantages offered by Cyprus, Alexandretta and the various places that had been under consideration for the past two years - in favour of the former.[198] Similar studies had already been prepared

197. Layard to Salisbury, 1 and 15 May; 26 July 1878, Layard Papers, BM.Add.MSS.39130.

198. 'Very Confidential Memorandum,' R.Home, 8 June 1878, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/1; H.Temperly, "Disraeli and Cyprus," English Historical Review, XLVI, April 1931, pp.274-9; "Further Evidence on Disraeli and Cyprus," ibid, XLVII, July 1931, pp.457-60; D.E.Lee, "A Memorandum concerning Cyprus, 1878," Journal of Modern History, III, June 1931, pp.235-41.

by the India Office and Admiralty.[199]

Now Home's reasons for a British acquisition in the Near East embraced political and commercial as well as purely military and naval considerations; though the latter still remained predominant. Militarily, the place should give Great Britain "potentially the key to Asia Minor;" be "sufficiently large for us to assemble an Army on, to make it the secure base for checking any hostile advances from the Caucasus or the headwaters of the Tigris or Euphrates, on either the Persian Gulf or Suez Canal;" be capable of feeding an army, providing mules, horses and oxen and encamping "large bodies of troops of all Arms." For naval requirements, it should provide "a good and easily defensible harbour" in which British men-of-war might securely coal while patrolling the routes to India.

Gallipoli was too far from the Indian trade-route, would constitute a "standing menace" to Russia, Turkey, Italy and Austria in the Black Sea and on the Danube, was too costly to fortify sufficiently and did not command Syria or Mesopotamia. Lemnos and Mitylene, while possessing good harbours, were "rather points of observation for watching the mouth of the Dardanelles" than what was needed. Stampalia - over which Simmons and Hood had disagreed earlier - was nothing more than a coaling and refitting station. Crete possessed "many most excellent harbours" and was admirably situated for watching the Adriatic and Aegean Seas and for protecting the Indian trade-route. But it was too far from the Syrian

199. 'Notes on the following Islands and Ports in the Grecian Archipelago and in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean,' F.Evans, 23 March 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6.

coast and the Suez Canal; its aspirations for Greek union "would infallibly produce political trouble;" while its elongated shape made it peculiarly indefensible. Acre and Haifa did not possess good harbours and were limited in their influence by the desert east of the Jordan. Alexandria could not be considered since its occupation meant the occupation of Egypt. The real choice therefore lay between Alexandretta and Cyprus.

Alexandretta was the recognised "gate of Asia;" it possessed the best road-stead on the coast and was the likely Mediterranean terminus for the proposed Euphrates Valley railway. Nevertheless, the harbour could not be defended against naval attack and required extensive jetties and piers costing £50,000 for embarking and disembarking troops and supplies. Fortifications to defend the six roads leading to it would cost £155,000 and require a garrison of from 6,000 to 10,000 men. There was an insufficient space for the organisation of a possible expeditionary force; while its close encirclement by mountains precluded the opportunity of introducing good administration throughout the province. In short, he concluded, "whether from a political, a military, a commercial, or from a naval point of view, the possession of Cyprus is more valuable to us than the possession of Scanderoon."[200]

The administration of Cyprus, especially under a soldier like Wolseley, would set an example more impressive in its influence than "half-a-dozen campaigns." It afforded "ample space for forming an Army" and possessed large quantities

200. 'WO Confidential Memorandum on Lt. Hare's Report on Scanderoon,' R.Home, 11 June 1878, SSP.

of animal transport. It was easily defensible by light works, for there were few landing places and a local militia such as V.Baker and Wolseley later recommended could readily be formed. "Whoever holds Cyprus potentially holds Scanderoon...holding Cyprus gives Scanderoon." While the harbours were deficient, there were many facilities for making one "far superior to any other in the Levant." Home had already pointed out in earlier memoranda how a force based on Alexandretta might best prevent an attack upon the Persian Gulf from the Armenian highlands; and the question had already been thoroughly discussed in India by Roberts and MacGregor who would most likely provide the troops for such an expedition. Home was perhaps too optimistic in believing, as Simmons' marginalia noted, that Cyprus need not become another military base on the scale of Gibralter or Malta; for as Salisbury later observed in perspective, when European interests had been focussed upon Spanish conflicts, England had occupied Gibralter; when on Italian wars, Malta; and now when upon Asia Minor or Egypt, Cyprus.[201]

It is beyond doubt that Salisbury had concluded the Anglo-Turkish convention before Home's considered appreciation of the value of Cyprus had been placed in his hands; and it was only after "the mischievous article" on "The 'Fiasco' of Cyprus" by that influential war correspondent, Archibald Forbes, had in its damnation capped a furor of criticism, coinciding with fresh difficulties on the Bosphorus and in Afghanistan, rumours of a break-down in the Commissariat arrangements and of disagreements between Wolseley and Layard, that the Cabinet seriously began to think of preparing "some

201. "Lord Salisbury at Manchester," Times, 18 October 1879.

kind of confidential report...as to the War Office's ideas of the possible military value of Cyprus" that could be presented as a manual before Parliament;[202] and that, feeling themselves "very much mislead by the Intelligence Department regarding Cyprus and its condition," i.e., it "did not answer the purpose for which it was acquired, namely to be a spot where a considerable Force could rendez-vous and be organised for employment either in Asia Minor or in Egypt," both Stanley and Smith should personally investigate matters on the spot.[203]

Certainly, professional opinions both differed and fluctuated as to the strategical importance of Cyprus. Unlike Home, Wolseley had been "never able thoroughly to satisfy" himself of the "wisdom of the measure." He insisted that the logical alternative route to India was by the Cape, but that if acquisitions were to be made in the East more directly to secure the Indian line of communication, an occupation of Egypt would have been more to the purpose. He envisaged such an occupation as "laying the foundations of another - an African - Empire of immense magnitude," a "grand measure... worthy of a nation that already had an Eastern Empire." Indian troops could garrison Egypt while an Egyptian Army of the kind later commanded by Wood, Grenfell, Wingate and Kitchener would enable "us to economise the use of the British

202. Northcote to Salisbury, 7 October 1878; Salisbury to Northcote, 10 October 1878, Iddesleigh Papers, BM.Add.MSS.50052 and 50019; A.Forbes, "The 'Fiasco' of Cyprus," Nineteenth Century, IV, October 1878, pp.609-26.

203. Wolseley's Cyprus Journal, 5 November 1878, PRO/WO 147/5; Salisbury to Smith, pte, 20 October 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6/242.

soldiers in India." The annexation of Cyprus, on the other hand, was "a half and half measure that will certainly entail great outlay upon us to secure us - what? For the life of me I cannot tell."[204] Encountering the fiercest opposition and obstructiveness from the Horse Guards, Wolseley's appointment as High Commissioner and Governor General of Cyprus met with a very inauspicious start that could not fail to provide fuel for journalistic criticism.[205] The despatch and disembarkation of the expeditionary force had been so mismanaged as to result in "almost a disaster."[206] "The muddle of the stores is something astounding," wrote Admiral Sir John Hay, pro. tem. Governor until Wolseley's arrival, "the whole force has had to be landed and all the provisions etc because everything was in such inextricable confusion that they could not send the detachments away until all the provisions were re-sorted on shore. Thus instead of troops being sent on arrival to their destinations they have all to be landed stores and all before they can find anything they want to provide the troops with."[207] "If such things occur when we are taking possession of an island, where no one opposes us," Sir Donald Currie asked the R.U.S.I., "what is to be the system under which we are to disembark our forces in face of an enemy?"[208] This mishandled affair, for which

204. Ibid, 8 July 1878.

205. Ibid.

206. Remarks by Sir Donald Currie, 28 March 1879, J.R.U.S.I., XXIII, 1879, p.473.

207. Hay to Hornby, pte, 28 July 1878, 'Letters: Naval Officers,' Hornby Papers, PHI/1209.

208. Remarks by Sir Donald Currie, 28 March 1879, J.R.U.S.I., XXIII, 1879, p.473.

Wolseley was not responsible, nevertheless aggravated his fear that he might be pigeon-holed and precluded from employment in the Afghan and Zulu Wars:[209] his prospects looked bleak; he fell to quarrelling with his Commissariat Officers, with Hay and Hornby, with Layard and even with Salisbury; and his impressions of Cyprus, upon which the strength of the Government's defence largely depended, remained disenchanted. Nevertheless, with characteristic exhuberance and perhaps in conscious retaliation to Forbes' article, he made it publicly and officially known that something could be made of Cyprus by vigorous administration and judicious sense; and Smith and Stanley returned to England much comforted.[210]

In much the same way, General Sir Samuel Baker, while initially skeptical and full of misgivings, felt after visiting Cyprus that it was capable of great and rapid development if administered, financed and irrigated immediately.[211] Hamley however doubted whether Cyprus was well situated for operating against Russia in Asia Minor at least at the outset of a campaign, since Alexandretta was "more than 400 miles as the crow flies from Erzeroum," and the logical point of landing should therefore be Trebizond.[212]

209. Wolseley's Cyprus Journal, PRO/WO 147/5.

210. Ibid, 2 and 4 November 1878; G.J.Wolseley, "Letter from Cyprus," MacMillan's Magazine, XXXIX, November 1878, p.96.

211. Baker to Beaconsfield, 24 February and 28 April 1879, Hughenden MSS, XVI/B/134 and 136.

212. Hamley to Northbrook, 20 and 31 July 1878, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/23.

Naval opinion was also divided. Admiral Sir W.F. Marten published a "devastatingly critical" pamphlet condemning the acquisition of Cyprus.[213] On the other hand, Hornby believed that it satisfied everything "in the way of a naval station."[214] Hornby's successor as Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, Admiral Sir Beauchamp Seymour, however, believed that "we are entirely in a false position there" and "ought never to have gone near it." There was "not a harbour on the island:" Larnaca and Limasol were no more than summer anchorages; while a vast expenditure would be necessarily incurred in the construction of roads and the conversion of Famagusta into a safe winter anchorage. Nevertheless, he admitted that "its strategical position with respect to the Suez Canal of the present and the Euphrates railway of the future leaves little to be desired."[215]

Most important of all perhaps was the importance of Cyprus as viewed from the peculiar angle of Simla. Most Indian opinion, while agreeing that the occupation of Cyprus established Great Britain in a "very compact defensive position, strong enough with our ships in the Levant, to bar most effectively, with a minimum expenditure of force, the advance of any Russian army towards Mesopotamia and Arabia" accorded

213. Admiral Sir W.F.Marten, Cyprus as a Naval Station and a Place of Arms, London, 1879; Lee, Cyprus Convention Policy, p.119.

214. Hornby to Smith, 17 August 1878, 'Official Correspondence: Admiralty,' Hambledon Papers, PS6; Wolseley's Cyprus Journal, 2 and 4 November 1878, PRO/WO 147/5.

215. Beauchamp Seymour to Childers, 30 April and 29 May 1880; cited in Childers, Life, pp.283-8.

the Anglo-Turkish Defence Treaty a greater importance.[216] By putting "the keys of the Sea of Marmara in our pocket and the command of Armenia in our hands," wrote the Viceroy, it strengthened British maritime supremacy on the Mediterranean and checked a potential Russian threat to the Persian Gulf. "With the command of the Black Sea and Mediterranean, a free field for our forces in Armenia, and a ready point d'appui in Cyprus which lies across the coast like a giant ironclad, it was a material impossibility for Russia to use Batoum as a base of operations against India."[217] Aitchison, on the other hand, a member of Lytton's Council, could not find words "strong enough to condemn the policy of Asia Minor." Great Britain was "saddled with the military defence of a new Empire which we may not govern:" our area of vulnerability had been vastly enlarged; and the Eastern Question had been transferred from the Berlin Congress to the Indian Bureau.[218] Somewhat less jaundiced, the Secretary of the Foreign Department of the Indian Government, A.C.Lyall, failed to see clearly what definite and direct objectives the Convention had achieved other than the imposition of rather extensive trusts; yet he admitted that Britain's Asiatic liabilities were moving very fast, that they had been materially affected by the Russo-Turkish War and that, in view of the rumoured Russian demonstration towards India, "some special precautions

216. Lytton to Temple, 18 June 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/3.

217. Ibid.

218. Aitchison to Northbrook, 21 September 1878, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/19.

were needed for the protection of our own frontiers."[219] Perhaps the most shrewd commentator was Sir Richard Temple, the vigorous Governor of Bombay. In his opinion, the Convention provided a decided asset to India by narrowing the lines of possible Russian aggression to include routes from the Volga and Astrakhan north of the great Caucasus and eliminating those through Poti-Baku, Kars-Tehran and Kars-Diabekir to the south; it provided a base for influencing Persia, and controlled both the Dardanelles and the Asiatic shores. On the other hand, it was bound to divert Russian activity in the direction of Merv and might even provoke a retaliatory Russo-Persian-Mesopotamian defence alliance. In any event, the near certainty of Russian intrigue in Asia Minor would compel Great Britain to place troops in Armenia or raise Turkish contingents there.[220]

Indeed, it was this assumption that the Cabinet had bound the country to a virtual military occupation of Asiatic Turkey, creating a contiguous and combustible military frontier with Russia, and making Armenia - where every military advantage in terms of proximity of manpower resources and communications, and defensibility was on the side of Russia - the future battleground in Asia between Russian and British forces, that aroused the most virulent criticisms. The provision of extra garrisons and barracks would entail great cost, overwhelm the recruiting machinery and upset what balance remained in the Cardwellian system. For these very reasons, Salisbury

219. Lyall to Northbrook, 19 August 1878, ibid.

220. Temple to Northbrook, 22 August and 18 October 1878, ibid; same to Lytton, 16 August 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/9.

rejected the idea of "partial or complete occupation" in favour of what he termed "the pacific invasion" of Asia Minor by a miniature army of "officials, generals and officers disguised as consuls" whose invigorating and cleansing presence would "furnish the best bulwark against Russian advances."[221] But beyond acquiring a store of valuable military intelligence concerning the railways, harbours, topography, defences and possible lines of Russian advance towards Alexandretta and the Persian Gulf, the army of consuls were doomed to do little else;[222] and with the return of Gladstone's administration they were eventually recalled. Within a decade, the defence of British-Indian interests which had called the Anglo-Turkish experiment into being had been more specifically and directly provided for with the occupation of Egypt, a rapprochement with Persia and the settlement following the second Afghan War - though at the expense of that disturbance of Cardwell's system which Salisbury had wished to avoid. But this is anticipating, and Salisbury, confronted with growing evidence of Russian intrigue at Cabul, asked Temple whether a similar defensive arrangement could not be made with Afghanistan.[223]

221. Salisbury to Temple, pte, 20 September 1878, Temple Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.F.86/15; Lee, Cyprus Convention Policy, pp.125-65.

222. Chermside to Ardagh, n.d., Ardagh Papers, PRO/30/40/1; WO Confdl Paper 0703, Col. R.Home, 12 August 1878, SSP.

223. Salisbury to Temple, pte, 20 September 1878, Temple Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.F.86/15.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR,

JULY 1878 - SEPTEMBER 1880.

From Plevna to the Congress of Berlin, the 'defence of India' question centered almost exclusively in the Near East; but in the military preparations considered by Whitehall and their diplomatic sequel the Indian Government had not had, nor wanted, much say or share. It is true that Temple's foresight and immense energy had been largely responsible for the swift and bloodless despatch of 10,000 troops to Malta and Cyprus;[1] that plans had been made for the occupation of the Suez Canal[2] and for Indian coastal defence against marauding Russian cruisers;[3] that Johnson had worked out a fair scheme for the mobilisation if necessity arose of 30,000 troops;[4] and that Lytton had reminded Salisbury to keep Indian interests foremost in his mind at Berlin.[5]

1. Salisbury to Lytton, 29 March 1878; Cranbrook to Lytton, 1,20,27 May 1878; Lytton to Salisbury, 27 March 1878, same to Temple, 30 March and 1 April 1878; same to Cranbrook, 3 April 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/3; Temple Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.F.86/5; Salisbury Papers; Cranbrook Papers, T501/74; 'Major-General Ross's Report of the Progress to and Landing at Malta of the Indian Expeditionary Force,' 21 June 1878, no.1501, IMP, vol.1183.

2. 'Memorandum on the Employment of an Indian Force in Egypt; its organisation and strength, and the information which is required,' E.H.H.Collen, 18 January 1878, WOP, W35.

3. Lytton to Cranbrook, 10 April 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/3; Cranbrook Papers, T501/74; Buckingham to Cranbrook, pte, 6 April 1878, ibid, T501/104; 'Confidential Memorandum on the Protection of the Principal Sea-ports on the West and East Coasts of the Presidency,' Gen. Sir N.Chamberlain, 21 April 1878, nos.1090, 1136, 1137, IMP, vol.1183.

4. Lytton to Cranbrook, 15 June 1878, Lytton Papers, ibid; Cranbrook Papers, T501/76.

5. Ibid.

But the Viceroy had made clear that the Amir's hostile intransigence and the likelihood of a Russian demonstration towards India in the event of war made it impossible for him to consider exhausting India militarily and financially to support British operations in Europe or to strike at Russia through Afghanistan.[6] Thus constrained by events and a Cabinet that was all too apprehensive of his mercurial behaviour, the Viceroy found himself confronted at the close of the Congress in July 1878 with a critical and deteriorating military situation in Central Asia where Russia, checked on the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and in Armenia, was trying "to score fresh points on the Caspian and at Cabul."[7]

Cavagnari's reports that 60,000 to 80,000 Russian troops - an army "five times as strong as" and "150 miles nearer than" any army hitherto massed by the Russians on the Afghan frontier - were gathering at Kizil Arvat and Charjui;[8] rumours of a Russian expedition from the Volga and Caspian;[9] Kauffman's correspondence with Sher Ali Khan and the despatch of a Russian mission to Cabul as the prelude to

6. Lytton to Salisbury, 8 March 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/3; Salisbury Papers.

7. Lytton to Cranbrook, 21 July 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/3; Cranbrook Papers, T501/76.

8. Cavagnari to Lytton, 13 and 29 June, 2 July 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/9; Lytton to Cranbrook, 3 August 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/49.

9. 'Russian Military Movements in Turkestan since 1875,' by Col. O.T.Burne, enclosing extracts from Mitchell(no.xv, 21 May 1878), and Consul Churchill(24 May 1878), IO.PSR, Misc., Lyall to Roberts, n.d., Roberts Papers, R35/1.

an alliance between the Amir and the Russian Government in spite of repeated assurances from St. Petersburg that Afghanistan was outside the Russian sphere of influence; the unavowed sympathy and support of Persia[10] - all together combined to convince Lytton that the time was ripe for a fresh endeavour to obtain by a combination of diplomacy and military pressure the advanced defensive frontier advocated earlier by Colley but now, rather than extend to Badakshan and the west bank of the Oxus (which were under Russian influence) was modified to run "along the Hindu Kush to Bamian, then down the Helmund to Girishk and Candahar, and so across the sands of Western Beluchistan to the Persian Gulf."[11] "The fulcrum of the position we have to displace," he wrote, "is not at St. Petersburg, but at Cabul. Russian action, so conspicuous and effective as this, can only be counteracted by British action equally resolute and prompt. Fortunately such action need not be European. There is no occasion for sending fleets to the Black Sea or ultimatums to St. Petersburg. In its present stage the question is an Afghan one rather than a Russian, a Local rather than an Imperial one."[12] The peace in Europe, Salisbury's transfer to the Foreign Office and the War Minister's assumption of the Indian seals seemed auspicious developments; and the Viceroy had reason to believe that by sending a counter diplomatic mission to Cabul, or if that were refused or failed, by provoking revolution among known anglophile

10. Lytton to Cranbrook, pte and urgent, 3 August 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/49.

11. Ibid.

12. Same to same, 12 August 1878, ibid.

elements in Afghanistan through the occupation of the Kurram valley and Candahar, he could arrive at some understanding whereby the Amir would agree to receive British missions in his capital whenever the Indian Government might send them, would allow the Indian Government to establish a permanent military mission at Herat, and would guarantee never "to enter into negociations with, or receive agents from, any other state or nation," without the permission of the Indian Government.[13] The improved defensive position thus acquired on the North-West Frontier, "coupled with our action at Cyprus and in Asia Minor...would have the effect of drawing a line of southern demarcation from Bayazid to Kashgar, which Russia will never be able to pass; and thus directing her expansive tendencies and efforts, westwards towards China, instead of southwards, towards India and the Persian Gulf."[14] Only if the Russian army moved in force across the Oxus or Persia moved against Herat would it become necessary to occupy Bamian, isolate Sher Ali, break up his empire, and coerce Persia from the Persian Gulf.[15] Permission in principle to demand a diplomatic mission at Cabul was received from the Cabinet on 3 August;[16] and on that day the Viceroy forwarded to

13. 'Confidential Memorandum G.of I. to A.G., 8 August 1878'; 'Confidential Memorandum A.G. to Military Dpt., 10 August 1878,' Roberts Papers.

14. Lytton to Cranbrook, pte and urgent, 3 August 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/3; Cranbrook Papers, T501/49.

15. Same to same, 31 August 1878, ibid.

16. S.of S. to V/Roy, 3 August 1878, IO.Political and Secret Tlgms, p.160.

Cranbrook "an enormously long and exceedingly valuable" exposition of his policy and plans ("which cannot fail to do good" or produce "a satisfactory effect in the right quarters"),[17] accompanied by copies of Colley's Memorandum and the Merv Despatch, which together with detailed telegraphic instructions to Chamberlain that before he enter into negociations with the Amir he insist that the Russian mission be withdrawn and dismissed, reached London on 8 or 9 September.

The effect upon the Cabinet, scattered as they were throughout the country houses of England and Scotland, was immediate and electric. It was clear that the Viceroy, for some reason or none, had not been informed of the Cabinet's 'afterthought' to send a diplomatic protest[18] to St. Petersburg, and that the proposal to insist on the expulsion of the Russian mission before the beginning of Anglo-Afghan negociations would "be an affront which a great power could not endure:"[19] it might compel the Russians to send a major expedition from Tashkent to re-assert their interests at Cabul, and anyway intensify Russian activity along the Afghan borders: this would bring the Russian Government into direct conflict with the Government of India, and by "justifying Russia's too high-handed proceeding in Turkey by our own in India,"[20] complicate and prolong the peace

17. Lytton to Strachey, 5 and 26 August 1878, Strachey Papers.

18. M.Cowling, "Lytton, the Cabinet and the Russians, August to November, 1878," EHR, LXXVI, 1961, pp.59-79.

19. Cranbrook to Lytton, 15 September 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/3.

20. Same to same, pte, 28 October 1878, ibid.

settlement in Europe. Salisbury, responsible for European affairs and mindful of Lytton's fertile 'nervousness' and of his earlier attempts to force the Government's hand in the Turkish mission, needed no prompting from Walpole to recognise that the Viceroy was "going too fast and perhaps plunging us into an Affghan War," and that the result of his action "has really been to more or less fetter the hands of the Government."[21] After corresponding with Beaconsfield therefore on 11 September he telegraphed Walpole to ask Cranbrook urgently for authority to stop Lytton sending Chamberlain's mission until the Russian reply had arrived. But Cranbrook had already done so.[22] Beaconsfield always prepared to trust the judgement of a vigorous subordinate when he himself was out of touch, had at first acquiesced in Salisbury's alarm and written tartly to Cranbrook that the Viceroy's apparent ignorance of the diplomatic protest was "much to be deplored."[23] But it was evident to all, because Lytton had "ostentatiously, indiscreetly," but "officially" publicised his policy widely throughout India and in the Times, that "to stop the Mission altogether" would place the Indian Government "in a very embarrassing and awkward position." Indeed, wrote Walpole, "it seems almost impossible that the Mission should be stopped."[24]

21. Walpole to Cranbrook, pte, 12 September 1878, 'Letters of Walpole,' Cranbrook Papers, T501/266.

22. Salisbury to Beaconsfield, 11 September 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ce.

23. Beaconsfield to Cranbrook, confdl, 12 September 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/266.

24. Same to same, ibid; Walpole to Cranbrook, pte, 12 September 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/266 and 56.

Moreover, Cranbrook's response[25] in forwarding to Beaconsfield "a huge mass of Lytton's MS despatches and of printed papers relative to the subject...most powerfully written and grasping the whole subject with a master hand" had, as Lytton hoped, persuaded the Prime Minister's sympathies, given Beaconsfield his first clear indication of Lytton's policy, revived his apprehensions as to Salisbury's Russophilism, and confirmed his suspicions that the antipathy between the imperious Salisbury and the "peppery" Cranbrook, "the jealousy of the F.O. by the Ind. Office - probably returned - a Vice-Roy not quickly or perfectly informed" - rather than the nature of Lytton's policy - were the "real seeds of precipitation and disaster."[26] He approved in general of the Viceroy's policy because he had "always deplored 'masterly inactivity' which was certain to bring us the state of affairs we have now to encounter;" and was confident that it was "not too late to put it all right" and that Russia would "give up her permanent mission, and draw in her horns in every way, if, while very conciliatory in Europe, we are firm...." Salisbury, in future, was to "look to it."[27] Nevertheless, the Prime Minister, "ill and worn-out"[28] associated himself with the restraining telegram which reached Lytton on 14 September, two days before Chamberlain

25. Beaconsfield to Salisbury, 12 September 1878, bound vol., 'Letters from Lord Beaconsfield,' Salisbury Papers.

26. Ibid.

27. Same to same, confdl, 17 September 1878, ibid.

28. Lytton to Strachey, 28 October 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/10.

was due to depart.[29]

When Lytton received the telegram, however, he felt it would be impossible and undignified to arrest the events he had set on foot. Chamberlain's enormous prestige carried its own publicity, and he was already at Peshawur; the native ambassador who was to arrange for the Mission's reception had left for Cabul; and Cavagnari had already committed the Indian Government to protect the Khyberees against Afghan reprisals in return for the Mission's safe-conduct. He hardly believed that the protest to St. Petersburg, or for that matter Chamberlain's mission,[30] would achieve the objects he had in mind, and detected in the telegram Salisbury's "singular combination of cowardice and meanness" and his overbearing haste to do "all he can to trip me up." He was also persuaded that Salisbury's "tendency ...to make our dealings with the Amir dependant on communications with St. Petersburg, and subject in detail to varying orders from Downing St." carried the "greatest risk in complicating the Cabul question and converting it from a local to a European one."[31] He therefore urged Chamberlain, reluctant to injure his reputation unnecessarily by risking a snubbing, on to Ali Musjid, the first post inside Afghan territory where, predictably, the mission was "openly turned back" by Afghan troops. "All that we have done in the past towards securing our North-West Frontier," wrote

29. S.of S. to V/Roy, 13 September 1878, IO.Political and Secret Tlgms, p.168.

30. Forrest, Life of Chamberlain, p.478.

31. Lytton to Cranbrook, 10 and 11 October 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/9.

Chamberlain, "seems suddenly to have crumbled away, and all the advantage to be on the side of Russia. Now we have Russian officers securely seated at Cabul and employed in undermining us, with our largest military cantonment at Peshawur only 150 miles distant, our Mission scornfully rejected, and the Amir's troops holding the Khyber....This is because we have never had any policy, nor indeed have we at the present moment one directing power, the Ministry, the India Office, the Viceroy and his Council, all at work, and as often at discord as agreed."[32]

The repulse of the mission, in Lytton's mind, simply cleared the way for the alternative measures he had sketched out earlier to Cranbrook and which had not been formally rescinded. The problem was essentially one of political warfare: how may one best upset an inconvenient neighbour? The Viceroy had good reason to believe that the Commander-in-Chief and the Military Department would now "continually" urge upon him "vast military operations of the wildest kind," "gigantic preparations," involving the movement of several heavy columns and a most perniciously premature march upon Jellalabad or Cabul whose only result would be "the probability of another campaign with Russia beyond the Oxus." "Such military advisers," he told Cranbrook, "are far more dangerous than the enemy." While the military operations "of a certain kind" were now "absolutely necessary," they "should be undertaken, only in support, and not in supercession, of political pressure."[33] Temperamentally

32. Forrest, Life of Chamberlain, p.483

33. Lytton to Cranbrook, pte, 23 September 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/50.

and exhuberantly a Wolseleyite, the Viceroy regarded with derision the "impenetrable self-satisfied contempt" of Indian officers for all foreign military experience no matter how great or varied or how widely acknowledged it may be, but especially when they failed to understand that large political objects may often best be accomplished by employing a small military force. If by threats in being he could provoke the deposition of Sher Ali, settle an anglophile amir upon the throne, and arrange for a defensive treaty on his own terms "without recourse to anything like a regular Cabul campaign, or invasion of Afghanistan,"[34] Lytton would have fulfilled his objectives acceptable to Cabinet and Opposition alike while being spared all the embarrassments, political, military and financial attendant upon an invasion, occupation and, possibly, annexation. He therefore refused to acquiesce in the demands of the Commander-in-Chief to stop the annual reliefs, bring reinforcements from England and double the strength of the Candahar column.[35] He rejected the notions of Rawlinson and Temple that he should occupy Cabul and Candahar, and operate as far afield as Badakshan and the Oxus.[36] "We should inevitably (and, as I believe, needlessly), raise and unite the whole country against us," he told Strachey:

> We should, at every step, leave behind us bitter

34. Ibid.

35. Lytton to Strachey, pte and confdl, 24 October 1878; Browne to Lytton, 16,22,27 October 1878; Haines to Lytton, pte, 5 November 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/10; 518/4.

36. Temple to Lytton, 27 August 1878, ibid; Temple Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.F.86/15.

memories, not merely of humiliated national sentiment, but of considerable social suffering from the unavoidable devastation of a barren country by a large invading force. We should have to take up advanced positions in a hostile country, from which we could not afterwards withdraw, at our own time, except under conditions replete with danger. We should ultimately have to occupy, for a lengthened period, at a heavy cost, a large tract of turbulent territory, conquered but not conciliated, and which we could not permanently hold by the sword alone. We should have reduced the conquered country to a condition ungovernable except by the presence of British bayonets, in support of puppet rulers, whom we could neither permanently maintain, nor creditably abandon....[37]

Accordingly, after 23 September, he "strictly confined" his preparations to the provision of light columns at Thal, Sukker and Peshawur, positions which were defensible, which ensured if need arose the rapid occupation of Pishin and the Kurram Valley, and which were yet sufficiently threatening to Cabul, Jellalabad and Candahar as to induce within a month the Amir's flight and departure.[38] When by the third week in October, the anticipated revolution failed to materialise, and the Amir's "saucy" and "insolent" letter of 18 October seemed to necessitate immediate war,[39] this delicate balance of force to task was deemed by Lytton not to be affected in any way.[40] His definite objective

37. Lytton to Strachey, 24 October 1878, ibid.

38. Lytton to Cranbrook, pte, 23 September 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/50; 'Measures to be adopted in the event of offensive operations being finally determined upon,' Military Dept. to Q.M.G., no.775K, 7 November 1878, IMP, vol.954.

39. Amir to Viceroy, 6 October 1878, Roberts, Forty-One Years in India, II, pp.118-9.

40. Lytton to Strachey, pte and confdl, 24 October 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/4.

remained the "permanent establishment of complete political control over Afghanistan, from the Khyber to the Oxus" and this could best be attained by the moral effects of light mobile forces threatening the centres of Afghan power and Russian intrigue rather than by the material effects of extensive and costly operations which the Indian armies were ill-equipped to conduct. But, as we have seen, this viewpoint had not gone unchallenged in India, and the Cabinet's response to the repulse of Chamberlain's mission threatened to upset, or even reverse it, completely.

The news of Chamberlain's failure had had two quite different effects in London. It provoked, on the one hand, a great outburst against Lytton for despatching the mission in defiance of explicit instructions not to. It evoked from Salisbury expressions of personal bitterness and despair as intense as any uttered the year before, "Lytton," he wrote to Beaconsfield, "has disobeyed orders twice and the results have not been happy." One of these results he saw in an increasing Russian intransigence in Europe - evidence that "the Russian military party, exaggerating our embarrassment in Affghanistan, are making a desperate effort to push the Emperor into war." He was apprehensive that "Cranbrook is disposed to trust Lytton too much...and does not realize sufficiently the gaudy and theatrical ambition which is the Viceroy's leading passion." "Without vigilant supervision," the Viceroy would "land us certainly in vast expense - possibly in a vast disaster."[41] It caused the Lord Chancellor to write sharply to Cranbrook:

41. Salisbury to Beaconsfield, pte, 10 October 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ce/284.

"the more I think of it the more unjustifiable Lytton's conduct seems to me to be. It is impossible to conduct Government at home if your Viceroy in India is to disregard a clear and unqualified telegram. The result may not be affected, and his action may in itself be right: of this I cannot at present judge, but his first duty was to obey orders."[42] It caused Cranbrook to be "perfectly frank" with Lytton, that in "sending forward the mission without further instruction," he had embarrassed the foreign policy of the Government, encouraged the Opposition, and given "an impression to some that you were rather forcing the hands of the Government and advancing to a foregone conclusion."[43] Even Beaconsfield felt constrained to tell the Queen that "they do not seem to have been very adroit on the spot."[44] "When V-Roys and Comms.-in-chief disobey orders, they ought to be sure of success in their mutiny. Lytton, by disobeying orders, has only secured insult and failure."[45]

On the other hand, this very insult and failure demanded instant redress. As we have seen, Beaconsfield had "read with becoming consideration all Lytton's wonderful MS pamphlets; which are admirable both in their grasp and their detail;"[46] and the same day the news was made known

42. Cairns to Cranbrook, confdl, 3 October 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/262.

43. Cranbrook to Lytton, 28 October 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/3.

44. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, secret, 26 September 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/C/58-9.

45. Same to Cranbrook, confdl, 26 September 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/266.

46. Beaconsfield to Salisbury, 3 October 1878, Salisbury Papers.

wrote with great vigour to Cranbrook that "there can be no Cabinets now, & matters must be settled by myself, & the Secretaries for For. Affairs & India. Under these circumstances, where you & the V-Roy agree, I shall, as a general rule, always wish to support you. No doubt Salisbury's views, under ordinary circumstances, would be prudent; but there are occasions when Prudence is not wisdom - And this is one - These are times for action - We must control, or even create events....What we want...is to prove our ascendancy in Affghanistan, &, to accomplish that, we must not stick at trifles."[47] The following day he telegraphed: "What does Lytton propose to do. We must be decided & firm, but, above all, take care, that our means are adequate to the occasion. This is why Napier always succeeded. Our former failure in Affghanistan was entirely owing to the incompetence of the Commander...."[48] Fearful of a repetition of the disastrous conduct of the first Afghan War and of the possibility of Russian entanglement, sensitive to the political effects of the "disgraceful" campaign now being waged in the Times by Lords Grey, Lawrence and Northbrook against intervention, bombarded by "strong" demands from the Duke of Cambridge, Haines, Norman, and the Military Committee of the Home Council, Cranbrook swiftly fell under the influence of Marlborough House and those who exaggerated the Afghan capacity for war, and repeatedly warned Lytton that without reserves the strength of his columns was insufficient for

47. Same to Cranbrook, confdl, 22 September 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/266.

48. Same to same, confdl tlgm, 23 September 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/B/1417.

the tasks he had allotted them, or for those that might eventuate.[49] "When military action begins," he wrote, "there will be no Aulic Council at home, but the preparatory steps may not unreasonably be subjected to Ministerial consideration."[50]

From Simla, the Viceroy as vigorously combatted this tendency to foist upon India reinforcements that by their unwieldiness would hinder rather than contribute to the accomplishment of the limited objectives he had in view. Drawing upon the combined authority of Chamberlain, Browne, Lyall, Colley, Egerton, Stewart and Sandeman, he pointed out that the Commander-in-Chief had no personal experience nor exceptional knowledge of Afghan warfare and was assisted by "exceptionally weak" military advisers; that Haines' demands for 40,000 extra troops were "incomprehensible and ridiculous;" that since the promptitude and efficacy of his military policy was largely dependant upon the "skilful management" of the Transport and Commissariat Department - which was anyway notoriously "very weak, careless, and improvident" - any magnification of its tasks especially over the winter by every "superfluous bayonet, sabre or baggage animal" would bring "grave risk of military disaster... and political danger;" that "to put into the field now more men than we are able to move and feed, would expose us to all the appearance of a military check, attributable to want of forethought; would discourage the spirit of our native troops, and might involve serious risk of trouble with

49. Cranbrook to Lytton, pte, 21 October and 3 November 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/3.

50. Ibid.

frontier populations otherwise friendly"; and finally, that any English reinforcements at this time would proclaim "to unscrupulous foes" that in convenient times of crisis "we cannot undertake a European war and an Indian war at the same time" and that the columns as they stood were sufficient to ensure a firm negociating position "either for the submission of the Amir or the disintegration of his kingdom."[51]

This dispute was resolved by the Cabinet which met on 25 October to consider Lytton's telegram announcing the arrival of the Amir's "insolent" letter and demanding immediate war. The Viceroy had emphasised that unless operations were commenced "before the 20th November at latest," the military position in India would become "very embarrassing and unsafe." The winter snows would give the Amir six months' undesirable immunity, allowing him to strengthen his position politically and militarily and seriously increasing the danger of a solid Russo-Afghan alliance; the British forces concentrated on the frontier, while wearing "all the appearance of an impotent threat and resting passive under an unavenged affront publicly inflicted on us...in face of all our native subjects and feudatories, and all the frontier tribes," would have to be maintained at great cost on a war footing without "the smallest benefit to our political or military position." In these circumstances, he would deem it his duty "to disband them immediately, and explain

51. Lytton to Cranbrook, 31 October, 8 and 28 November 1878; same to Strachey, most pte and confdl, 24 October 1878; same to Cambridge, 8 November 1878; same to Malmesbury, pte, 31 October 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/3; Cranbrook Papers, T501/9.

to the people of India the circumstances which had left to the Government of India no alternative."[52] On receiving this information, Cranbrook had written Beaconsfield that it made "an early Cabinet absolutely necessary" for the Viceroy "cannot be left a day longer than necessary without instructions." He could not suggest any alternative to the "advance as proposed" for "we have stopped in too far to retreat without a loss of reputation which would be most damaging."[53] Salisbury, too, thought that "immediate action" was "quite conceivable," but would restrict operations to the occupation of the Kurram valley as a "material guarantee ...which would facilitate further operations, if they became necessary." "But whatever direction we may think it wise to give to the local authorities," he trusted "we shall keep all declarations of policy in our own hands." Lytton's actions were "not always destitute of caution," and his speeches and despatches were "dangerous." "If we do not interpose we may be pledged a great deal further than we wish to go."[54] These views received dramatic confrontation "in one of the most remarkable meetings of a Cabinet" that Beaconsfield had ever witnessed.[55]

Beaconsfield began by observing that "what was passed and inevitable" could not be undone. Cranbrook then explained

52. Lytton to Cranbrook, ibid.

53. Cranbrook to Beaconsfield, pte, 21 October 1878, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/120.

54. Salisbury to Beaconsfield, confdl, 22 October 1878, ibid, B/XX/Ce/290.

55. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, secret, 26 October 1878, ibid, B/XIX/C/71.

the situation on the frontier and recommended the adoption of Lytton's proposals. He was followed by Cairns, Northcote and Cross, who could see no casus belli in the Amir's actions. They were supported by Salisbury who "spoke with great bitterness of the conduct of the Viceroy." Lytton "was forcing the hand of the Government and had been doing so from the very first;" he "thought only of India" and was dictating "the foreign policy of the Government in Europe and Turkey;" he had "twice disobeyed orders" and "unless curbed...would bring about some terrible disaster." To all these criticisms, Cranbrook retorted that the casus belli had been "formed by an aggregate of hostile incidents on the part of the Amir." After some silence, Beaconsfield spoke again. He agreed that it would be dangerous to call Parliament to sanction a war if our case was "not unimpeachable;" but he thought that a clear demonstration of British power and determination was now necessary, and that this could be done constitutionally without summoning Parliament. A strong column could occupy the Kurram Valley, not as part of a declaration of war "but as the taking of a 'material guarantee' that justice should be obtained for the English demand." He cited as a precedent the Russian occupation of the Principalities before the Crimean War. Such a step would be "in the nature of 'reprisals'...which were sanctioned by public law, and not considered as active hostilities." To this there was general assent. The Duke of Richmond and Salisbury "strongly approved," the latter because it provided a demonstration of power without necessarily leading to any disaster. Cairns, Cross and Northcote "murmured approbation." Thus Beaconsfield had adroitly worked the Cabinet around to

accepting what was essentially Lytton's whole thesis. At this point, Cranbrook spoke again:

> Suddenly Lord Cranbrook startled us all by saying, that he would not undertake the responsibility of such a course; that his own opinion was for war, immediate and complete; that he believed it inevitable sooner or later, and very soon; that the 'material guarantee' project was a half measure, and would be looked upon as an act of timidity; and secondly, that he would prefer continuing our preparations, postponing the inevitable campaign, to any middle course, and the more so because he would frankly confess that he was not altogether satisfied with the military preparations of the Viceroy; that Lord Lytton was acting in opposition to the military members of his Council - first in not employing as they thought sufficient English troops, and secondly in refusing to retain the reliefs, which Lord Cranbrook on his own responsibility, and in opposition to the opinion of Lord Lytton, had ordered to remain.
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> After this extraordinary statement on the part of the Secretary of India, in addition to the fact that none of the forces had as yet arrived at their stations, and that all was matter of calculation and estimate, there seemed only one course to take. The military preparations were ordered to be continued and completed, and even on a greater scale, while, in order to strengthen our case for Parliament, it was agreed that another message to the Amir, to be submitted, before transmission, to the Cabinet, should be prepared and sent.

The ultimatum, for it was such, so agreed upon, was sent to Cabul on 2 November. The Amir had received a Russian envoy at Cabul when war between England and Russia had appeared imminent; he had steadfastly refused to accord similar privileges to British officers; he had insulted the Viceroy and Sir Neville Chamberlain. He must therefore send a "full and suitable" apology in writing to India, and agree to receive a permanent British mission. If he failed to do so, he would be treated as a declared enemy of Her Majesty's Government. "I expect no submission," Cranbrook told Lytton,

"no apology but inevitable conflict." In that case "firmness, vigour and rapidity of action" would above all be required. "I hope we may never need occupy the country, but we must have such positions as to control it."[56] At sunset on 20 November, no reply having arrived to this ultimatum, the Commander-in-Chief telegraphed Generals Stewart, Roberts and Browne to begin leading their columns across the passes at midnight[57] - and at that hour the second Afghan War began.

The three campaigns comprising the Afghan War; the operations preceding the Treaty of Gandamak, November 1878 to May 1879; Cavagnari's murder and the subsequent occupation of Cabul, August 1879 to May 1880; Burrow's defeat and the siege and relief of Candahar, May 1880 to September 1881 - the first a masterpiece, the second a tragedy, the third a crime - need not be considered in any detail; for the seminal questions are firstly, how far did the military operations accomplish the politico-strategic objectives of the Government of India, viz., the scientific rectification of the North-West Frontier and the establishment of an ascendant political influence beyond; and secondly, to what extent did the war shape the subsequent character and direction of Indian military policy.

Both Lytton and the Cabinet were from the start, although for quite different reasons, agreed upon the need

56. Cranbrook to Lytton, confdl, 3 November 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/3.

57. 'Very Confidential Memorandum,' G.of I. to For. Dept., 7 November 1878, Roberts Papers; MacGregor, Life and Opinions, p.75.

to bring the war to a rapid and honorable conclusion; but the precise nature of the politico-strategic objectives they hoped thereby to achieve was much complicated by the controversy surrounding the "sensational" publication of Hamley's lecture before the Royal United Service Institution on "the strategical conditions of the North-West Frontier," and, more especially after the flight and death of Sher Ali, by the absence of any recognizably powerful authority at Cabul with whom to treat. While Lytton realized that "the startling rapidity and completeness" of the first encounters might result in the creation of a political vacuum in Afghanistan susceptible to increased Russian intrigue and the possible occupation of Balkh and the Oxus provinces which, in turn, might necessitate a British counter occupation of Herat, Bamian and the passes of the Hindu Kush, he believed immediate Russian intervention to be a remote and impracticable contingency and was, so long as the relative strategical positions of the British and Russian armies in Central Asia remained unaltered, averse to any extension of military operations in the spring beyond the limits he had laid down - the occupation of Pishin, the Kurram valley and Quetta - for such operations, he thought, excepting perhaps an attack on Jellalabad "which would probably decide or close the whole campaign," would tend to loosen his control over their political results.[58] They were bound to excite domestic troubles in Afghanistan, complicate the succession issue, and destroy the recuperative power of the population on which

58. Lytton to Cranbrook, pte, 28 November and 5 December 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/31; Colley to Roberts, 18 January 1879, Roberts Papers.

the peaceable maintainance of the status quo post bellum rested.[59] They would offer the "very amiable, rather weak, and not very wise" Commander-in-Chief dangerous scope to exercise his "exhorbitant" and "grandiose" schemes for advancing upon Merv, Herat and Cabul.[60] Moreover, the Military Department was "scandalously inefficient" for the conduct of more than one campaign.[61] "It is not too much to say," John Strachey confided to his brother, "that there is no military Department at all."[62] "No one in the Military or Commissariat Department," complained the Viceroy, "is capable of assisting me....Till now I have been working the Military Department myself."[63] Sir Edwin Johnson, Sir Richard Strachey and Colonel O.T.Burne were in England all as special advocates of his policy; Colley was shortly to join Wolseley in South Africa; the Commander-in-Chief and Chamberlain (acting Military Member of Council) were broken in health; Sir Sam Browne, "weak in Council," and "not much of a Departmental administrator," had proved "no Wellington in any sense of the word,"[64] while Roberts' "strategical qualifications," never wholly satisfying to the Viceroy,

59. Same to same, very confdl, 26 December 1878, ibid.

60. Same to same, ibid.

61. Ibid; J.Strachey to R.Strachey, 1 June 1880, Strachey Papers.

62. Same to same, 28 September 1879, ibid.

63. Lytton to Cranbrook, pte, 10 January 1879, Cranbrook Papers, T501/53.

64. Ibid; same to same, pte, 8 November and 12 December 1878, ibid, T501/31.

were soon to be "terribly shaken."[65] To remedy this situation, Lytton proposed[66] that Wolseley (who had "dreamt of an Afghan War" all through his career since boyhood, had been continuously kept informed of events by Colley, and had volunteered his services to Lytton, Salisbury, Cranbrook and the Duke of Cambridge "for the command of an Expeditionary Force beyond the Indian frontier")[67] be brought from Cyprus to replace Chamberlain, that Greaves be appointed Chief of Staff, and that Roberts and MacGregor be made Adjutant-General and Quarter-Master-General respectively.[68] More serious still was the "peculiarly weak" and "languid organisation" of the Commissariat Department, especially with respect to the overburdened Candahar line.[69] "My most urgent and reiterated orders," wrote Lytton, "have not been efficiently carried out, or intelligently understood; the warnings and appeals of the General have apparently been disregarded or underrated by the Head-Quarter Staff, to which his military correspondence is addressed...and so the transport service on this line, long behind-hand, is now breaking down."[70]

65. J.Strachey to R.Strachey, 28 January 1880, Strachey Papers.

66. Lytton to Cranbrook, most personal and confdl, 7 February 1879, Cranbrook Papers, T501/11.

67. A.W.Preston, "Sir Garnet Wolseley and the Cyprus Expedition, 1878," Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, (to be published); see also PRO/WO 147/5.

68. Lytton to Cambridge, pte, 20 February 1879, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/4; same to Cranbrook, pte, 23 March 1879, Cranbrook Papers, T501/79.

69. Same to Cranbrook, very confdl, 26 December 1878, ibid, T501/10.

70. Same to same, pte, 10 January 1879, ibid, T501/51.

"As matters stand at the present moment," he continued, "the Khyber and Kurram Columns could not now advance upon Cabul, even in the lightest marching order, with only 15 days' supply, and with their equipment and camp-followers cut down to a minimum. Yet this is the result of three months supposed preparation. Our Commissariat Department and system are rotten to the core; our Commissariat difficulties enormous. There are not many men in India who realise this, and there are fewer still, on whose practical assistance we can rely in any attempt to remedy it."[71] To alleviate this situation and avert "a most lamentable collapse," Lytton over-ruled the protests of the Commander-in-Chief, ordered the reduction of Stewart's column and appointed Sir Michael Kennedy Director-General of Transport; while at the same time, to maintain outward appearances of military efficiency, and to weaken the armoury of the Opposition critics, he volunteered to charge the total war costs to the Indian treasury, and even offered to despatch 5,000 to 10,000 troops to stiffen the deteriorating military situation in South Africa.[72] "We can pay our way to the end of this year, meeting without fresh taxation or loans, all our military charges...but we could not undertake a spring campaign without financial assistance from England. A single reverse in the field, or a serious breakdown in the Commissariat, might, in the present temper of the Home public, and the present difficult position of the

71. Same to Arbuthnot, 14 April 1879, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/4.

72. Same to Cranbrook, pte, 10 and 31 January 1879; same to Haines, 11 February 1879, Cranbrook Papers, T501/51; Lytton Papers, ibid.

Home Government, imperil all the fruits of our success so far. This being the case, as we already hold more territory than we require to keep for the permanent security of our frontier, our only present difficulty is...to find some authority at Cabul with whom we can treat." "We have nothing to gain and much to risk by going further; whilst on the other hand we can, without inconvenience or danger, remain where we are as long as we please." It was necessary that the Government therefore arrive at an immediate decision concerning a spring campaign and the nature of the frontier it wished permanently to maintain.[73]

In London, the "cool impudence" of Russia's offer of mediation and her reluctance to confirm the withdrawal of her mission from Cabul suggested to Cranbrook that while the possibility of direct Russian assistance to the Afghans could be ruled out on practical grounds, and because such action would constitute a declaration of war, Russia might exploit Britain's Afghan embarrassment to secure territorial compensations in Europe when the executive terms of the Berlin Treaty were due for completion in May. "This country may then be driven to war," he wrote, "and I should like to have Afghanistan done with before that date."[74] Chelmsford's ill-management of the Zulu War culminating in the Isandlhana disaster, as well as an imminent Burmese war, not only threatened to drain still further Britain's available military resources when they might least be able to absorb it, but

73. Lytton to Egerton, most confdl, 20 January 1879, Lytton Papers, ibid; Lytton to Cranbrook, pte, 10 January 1879, Cranbrook Papers, ibid.

74. Cranbrook to Lytton, confdl, 28 October 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/3.

also called for some early compensatory victory elsewhere to maintain the illusion of national military power, and nullify the Liberal party's exultation of European and Afghan difficulties.[75] The "malice, hatred and all uncharitableness" of the Opposition, manifested by the Afghan Committee and the vindictive self-exculpatory attacks in Press and Parliament by the ex-Viceroys Lawrence and Northbrook upon Lytton's Afghan policy, made the Government "uneasy and anxious" about the strength and security of their political position already seriously weakened by the news from South Africa, and the "great and growing distress" throughout the country in trade and agriculture which the additional taxes attendant upon a prolonged winter campaign would necessarily aggravate. For all these reasons the Cabinet was "extremely anxious to settle the Cabul question pacifically as soon as possible, on a basis involving only the absolute minimum of territorial acquisition."[76] But while Lytton was cautioned against occupying Jellalabad as contrary to the spirit of the Queen's proclamation,[77] and while it was agreed "that for the present holding what we have and waiting is the best policy,"[78] it was clear to Cranbrook that "we must have such terms as will give us real security against

75. Same to same, confdl, 25 November 1878, ibid; Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 4 April 1879, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/B/84-142.

76. Cranbrook to Lytton, confdl, 25 November and 8 December 1878; Lytton to Egerton, most confdl, 20 January 1879, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/3; 518/4.

77. Cranbrook to Lytton, confdl, 8 December 1878, ibid.

78. Ibid.

military and political intrigue."[79] The problem was at once political and strategical; how may one best defend a frontier, and it proved almost impossible to reconcile the conflicting theories that Hamley's lecture provoked.

In his lecture on 13 December,[80] as in his earlier letters to the Times, Hamley urged the anticipation of a regular Russian invasion of India by occupying Candahar while remaining passively defensive in entrenched camps behind the north-eastern passes. This policy aroused three broad reactions. In the first place, the concept of a passive defence in the Kurram and Khyber was eschewed by War Office pundits - Alison, East, Lysons and Simmons - as "fallacious"; but while endorsing Colley's theory of a vigorous offensive northwards they were unable to agree as to what constituted a properly scientific frontier in the North-East to allow for its prosecution.[81] Secondly, the idea of annexation was criticised by the Opposition's unofficial military advisers, Adye and Baring, as being

79. Cranbrook to Temple, confdl, 8 December 1878, Temple Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.F.86/15.

80. E.B.Hamley, "The Strategical Conditions of our Indian North-West Frontier," J.R.U.S.I., XXII, 1878, pp.1027-46.

81. 'Memorandum on the Rectification of the North-West Frontier of India,' A.Alison, 26 November 1878; WO Strictly Confdl Paper 0719, 'Memorandum on the Choice of a Military Frontier for India on the North-West,' A.Alison, 9 December 1878; 'Memorandum on General Hamley's proposal for the rectification of our Indian North-West Frontier,' A.Alison, 16 December 1878; 'Memorandum on Maj.-General Hamley's Lecture,' C.J.East, 16 December 1878; 'Memorandum on Maj.-General Hamley's Lecture,' D.Lysons, 17 December 1878; Simmons to Alison, strictly confdl, 9 and 18 December 1878, WOP; Colley to Alison, 18 February 1879, Simmons Papers, PRO/FO 538/2.

"quite masterly as a military exposition...from a purely military professional point of view," but "disappointing and incomplete" in consideration of the political and financial ramifications. "I really think the study of strategy has the effect of driving some people mad," wrote Baring, "otherwise I can't understand such an unquestionably able man as Hamley advocating the total annexation of Afghanistan on the ground of its affording an excellent base for future offensive operations." Nevertheless, commented Adye, "you will observe that he utterly demolishes the idea of taking up positions beyond the Khyber, and the other routes in that direction. Sir James Stephen will be much improved by reading it."[82] Finally, and in the opposite sense, the occupation of Candahar attracted the powerful sympathies of those traditional Sepoy soldiers and statesmen both in India and England - Rawlinson, Green, Merewether, Stavely, Haines and Napier - who had long thought in terms of Hamley's strategic propositions.[83] The most ardent and authoritative of these was Napier who took leave from Gibraltar expressly to urge upon the Lords, the Duke of Cambridge, the War Office and the India Office the adoption of Hamley's views.[84] The effect of the combined authority of Hamley and Napier, and of the conflicting viewpoints set

82. Adye to Northbrook, 2 November and 18 December 1878; Baring to Northbrook, 10 November 1878, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/23.

83. Cranbrook to Lytton, confdl, 16 December 1878, 11 January, 2 and 23 February 1879, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/3 and 4.

84. Ibid; Cambridge to Cranbrook, pte, 1 March 1879, Cranbrook Papers, T501/264/5.

in opposition, was soon felt. Apprehensive that the Hamley-Napier combination would "make an impression," and "find much acceptance" among Indian authorities, the Cabinet displayed "a great unwillingness to go far and to accept a vague policy."[85] An India Office official wrote to Strachey that, as a result of Hamley's lecture, "you will have your difficulties in getting your soldiers out of Afghanistan. They will run their big wars when they are over the hills and Lytton will be towards Roberts as much as Gortchakoff is to Kauffman....Your Afghan policy will move step by step against all your better instincts and your best advisers and is now at the mercy of a few soldiers and of circumstances which you can no longer control."[86] Even Beaconsfield saw in Lytton's decision to occupy Jellalabad evidence that "the Indian Government is trifling with us & means to occupy Cabul & greatly annex."[87] Two days after the publication of Hamley's lecture therefore the Prime Minister telegraphed the Viceroy to ascertain Lytton's views as to the strategical requirements of the new frontier.[88]

Now Lytton had supposed that Hamley's lecture might have had the quite opposite effect upon the Cabinet: that it would encourage them to suppprt more than they had done Haines' views as to operations towards Herat and Merv while

85. Cranbrook to Lytton, confdl, 16 December 1878, 14 January 1879, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/3 and 4.

86. Mallet to Strachey, pte, 20 December 1878, 1 February 1879, Strachey Papers.

87. Beaconsfield to Cranbrook, confdl, 31 January 1879, Cranbrook Papers, T501/266.

88. Lytton to Cavagnari, personal and secret, 15 December 1878, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/10.

correspondingly deprecating any forward movement or acquisitions at the heads of the north-eastern passes. He therefore asserted[89] that Hamley's "incorrect and misleading" strategy was founded upon a "purely imaginary" assumption - "an organised Russian invasion and scientific campaign;" that the real danger to India was from Russo-Afghan intrigue; and that "the first essential of the security of our North-West Frontier, a permanent paramount influence at Cabul," could "only be obtained by taking and keeping such a position within striking distance of Cabul" as would render such intrigue "practically impossible." Nor did he believe Napier to be "a safe guide on the detailed management of such an enterprise as our Afghan campaign."[90] "The political power," he wrote, "which is ultimately responsible for the final results, cannot safely accept without verification the representations constantly urged on its acceptance by the military power." Finally, the very diversity of opinion provoked by Hamley's lecture seemed sufficient reason in itself for "adhering as closely, and steadily, as possible to the programme, whereby my own objectives were defined and limited, long before hostilities commenced."[91] The basis of any treaty should therefore include the dissolution of the Amir's authority over the Khyber and Kurram tribes; permanent British bases at Jellalabad, Pishin and the head of the Kurram valley; a permanent British mission at Cabul

89. Lytton to Cranbrook, pte, 15 January 1879, Cranbrook Papers, T501/51; Roberts to Colley, 25 February 1879, Roberts Papers.

90. Same to same, pte, 23 March 1879, ibid.

91. Same to Chamberlain, pte and very confdl, 8 June 1879, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/10.

and an agency at Herat; and the recognised right of access to Balkh, Maimena and Candahar.[92] Harassed by the fear that the South African disasters "would change everything, reduce our Continental influence, embarrass our finances, weaken us in the settlement of the Levant, complicate the arrangement of the Indian frontier, and encourage Russia to think that we have more on our hands than we can well manage in connection with using force against her,"[93] Beaconsfield was compelled to turn his attention almost exclusively upon the Cape and to leave to Lytton the strategical settlement of his own relatively well-managed campaign about which the experts were so at variance.

Secret overtures were therefore opened in January exclusively through Cavagnari with the Amir-designate, Yakub Khan.[94] But these negociations were seriously endangered by some "very unfortunate and embarrassing" inflammatory public speeches by Roberts which, in prematurely disclosing the hand of the Indian Government, "burst like a bomb-shell on the Cabinet," and caused Lytton to reprimand Roberts that his action "had vitally affected our relations with Cabul" and that he was not "authorised to make any public proclamations...for the immediate information of Russia, Persia, the British Public, the Parliamentary Opposition,

92. Same to Egerton, most confdl, 20 January 1879; same to Cavagnari, pte and secret, 15 December 1878, ibid; Colley to Roberts, 8 December 1878, Roberts Papers.

93. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 27 November 1878, 11 February, 2,4,18 and 24 April 1879, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/B/1434; Cranbrook to Lytton, confdl, 26 January 1879, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/4.

94. Lyall to Cavagnari, 24 June 1879, Roberts Papers.

and all Europe." The Amir was strongly opposed to any cession of territory whatever, and in the absence of any rival, failure to reach terms with him would be final. "Our diplomacy would then be discredited as harsh and clumsy; we would have to deal with the wholesale disintegration of Afghanistan; Persia, instigated by Russia, would intervene in Turkestan and we shall be compelled to renew the war or end it unsatisfactorily by proclamation."[95] The reprimand had the desired effect: and the Treaty of Gandamak was signed in May which, in addition to fulfilling Lytton's frontier specifications, made Afghan foreign and military policy "exclusively subordinate to British direction." Thus before leaving India to join Wolseley in South Africa, Colley had the satisfaction of witnessing the full materialisation of one aspect of his scheme for the scientific defence of India. The Treaty of Gandamak, wrote Lytton's apologist in Blackwood's, Sir James Stephen, was "scarcely of less importance than the Treaty of Berlin."[96] "Affairs in Afghanistan," Beaconsfield wrote to the Queen, "really seem to be approaching a happy end."[97] "We have secured a scientific and adequate frontier for our Indian Empire."[98]

But all this changed. The massacre of Cavagnari's

95. Lytton to Roberts, pte, 18 May 1879, ibid, R37/14.

96. Sir James Stephen, "The Afghan Peace and our New Frontier," Blackwoods, July 1879, pp.109-128.

97. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 26 April 1879, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/B/1434.

98. Same to Lytton, confdl, 14 August 1879, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/517/7.

Embassy, the occupation of Cabul and Candahar, and the widespread breakdown of Afghan authority effectively abrogated the Treaty of Gandamak and re-opened the whole question of the future disposal of Afghanistan now even more complicated by opportunist Persian pressures for the cession of Herat, rumours of Russian counter-demonstrations along the Oxus and the unknown extent of the insurrection.[99] In these circumstances, it was clear that any military policy concerning Afghanistan could only be "conditional and indefinite"[100] and that the first step towards any solution was "to establish our military authority" throughout the country "by the occupation of its strongholds."[101] After this clear expression of military power, the Government could "dictate according to circumstances."

The news of this fresh disaster moved the Queen and the Horse Guards, mindful of Isandlhana, Beaconsfield's and Wolseley's arbitrary and unconciliatory treatment of Chelmsford's Generals, and the Viceroy's former disputes with Haines, Cranbrook and the Duke of Cambridge over strengths and objectives, to exert great pressure upon Lytton vastly to strengthen his armies in Afghanistan and not to interfere with the Generals.[102] It caused the Cabinet, so far as its principal members, alarmed at the state of the Indian High Command, could scramble together to assure the Viceroy of

99. Lytton to Cranbrook, 7 January 1880, Roberts Papers.

100. Ibid.

101. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 23 October 1879, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/B/1358.

102. Queen Victoria to Beaconsfield, 17 December 1879; Ponsonby to Queen Victoria, 1 September 1879, ibid.

their support "in a prompt and vigorous advance on Cabul."[103] It aroused the Viceroy to great outbursts of unwise and furious rage[104] which contributed in no small degree to Roberts' somewhat summary handling of the reprisal executions[105] and the MacGregor Commission's unscrupulous indictment of the Amir's complicity;[106] it led him rashly to suggest the permanent and complete annexation of Southern and Western Afghanistan under Stewart and Roberts respectively, with military garrisons at Cabul, Candahar, Ghuzni, Bamian and Jellalabad. These proposals, conveyed to the Cabinet on 19 October, were rightly judged "premature" until such time as military occupation was assured. "We have had too many fits and starts in our history, as far as Afghanistan and Central Asia are concerned," Beaconsfield told the Queen, "We must accustom the world a little to the permanence and stability of our authority there. In the military occupation of the country, we can march to Herat if the Russians advance to Merv, we can deal with Persia without being embarrassed by the claims or pretences of any Afghan Sovereign; we can, in short, if we are not in a hurry, consolidate yr. Majesty's Empire, and inflict such a check on any rival

103. Beaconsfield to Salisbury, confdl, 9 September 1879, Salisbury Papers; same to Queen Victoria, 6,7 and 9 September 1879, Hughenden MSS, ibid.

104. See, for example, Lytton's astonishing letter to Roberts, 9 September 1879, which he afterwards cautioned Roberts to burn and never to mention to anyone. Roberts Papers, R37/21.

105. Lytton to Roberts, 17 September 1879, Roberts Papers, R37/25.

106. Same to same, 12,13 and 14 December 1879, ibid, R35/61; J.Strachey to R.Strachey, 28 January 1880, Strachey Papers.

Power, which will influence the conduct of all Eastern States."[107]

The consensus of informed Indian opinion - Colley, Roberts, Lyall and Stewart - canvassed by Lytton over the winter favoured the disintegration of Afghanistan into a series of feudatory and tributory Principalities thereby overcoming the indefiniteness of military occupation; the removal of the Afghan capital to Candahar, its connection by rail to Quetta and Herat, and its permanent annexation as a separate State; the conditional cession of Herat to Persia for military guarantees; the development of the Kurram as the principal strategic route to Afghanistan; and a military demonstration towards Bamian, the Hindu Kush and the Oxus before complete withdrawal to the frontier prescribed at Gandamak.[108] In view of the rapid depreciation of the Native Armies and of the impending election, Lytton was in essential agreement.[109] But he was obstructed in this policy of immediate withdrawal by a situation that was partly of his own making. Long conscious of the "inveterate and unreasoning personal prejudice" entertained by the Queen and the Horse Guards towards Wolseley and Colley ("men of proved ability"),[110] the Viceroy suspected that

107. Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 23 October 1879, Hughenden MSS, B/XIX/B/1358.

108. Lyall to Roberts, 7 October, 4 December 1879; 18 and 25 February 1880; Colley to Roberts, 14 November 1879; Roberts to Lyall, 26 October 1879; Stewart to Roberts, 24 November 1879, Roberts Papers; Lyall Papers.

109. Lytton to Roberts, 26 January 1880, Roberts Papers, R37/73.

110. Lytton to Cranbrook, pte, 28 October 1879, Cranbrook Papers, T501/53.

"a conspiracy had been concocted secretly at the Horse Guards between the Duke and his two military puppets in India, regardless of the real interests of the Army, or the real requirements of the war...for Haines to get the personal command of the armies in Afghanistan by hook or by crook on any terms - and, having got it, to slip with it across the frontier to Cabul on any pretext."[111] He suspected further that Haines and Johnson were "rival courtiers of H.R.H., the Duke of Cambridge," whose first and sole consideration in dealing with any military question was how best to satisfy "the supposed wishes or proclivities of H.R.H."[112] Flattered and moved by the occult influence of the ambitious Adjutant-General, Greaves, who as Chief of Staff designate had been assiduously working by means less than scrupulous to get the entirely uncontrolled conduct of military operations placed in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief (hands which would then be notoriously directed by his own), Haines felt sufficiently confident officially to demand, under pain of resignation, personal command of all the Indian armies in Afghanistan with his head-quarters at Cabul.[113] Pressed by his Council, excited at Cavagnari's murder, and fearful of the political repercussions of Haines' resignation, the Viceroy rashly conceded to a compromise, restricting the Commander-in-Chief to Peshawur, which proved

111. Lytton to Colley, 30 March 1880; same to Stephen, pte and confdl, 31 March 1880, Lytton Family Papers.

112. Same to same, pte and very confdl, 16 March 1880, ibid.

113. Ibid.

more technical than real.[114] Construing this concession to be the licence he required, the Commander-in-Chief, much to the distress and discomfort of Roberts, Kennedy and Griffin began actively to intervene in operations beyond the frontier.[115] Cognizant of the need for the "strictest subordination of military action...to political purpose," the Viceroy viewed with "unspeakable alarm" the Commander-in-Chief's "irrepressible pretensions" because they threatened "serious risk of military disaster and absolute certainty of the gravest political complications." If Haines succeeded "in getting the bit between his teeth," he would "infallibly upset the coach." Every chance of an early and satisfactory political settlement would be irretrievably wrecked, provoking serious trouble in Afghanistan, and damaging the Government's electoral position.[116] Risking some Royal displeasure therefore in restraining "the frolics of this big military bull in our fragile china shop," he retracted his consent on grounds of high policy and insisted upon a programme of immediate withdrawal.[117]

Before this policy could be implemented, however, Beaconsfield's Ministry fell and Gladstone returned pledged to complete withdrawal and - especially after Burrow's defeat at Maiwand and Roberts' much over-rated relief of Candahar -

114. Ibid; Lytton to Roberts, 20 and 21 March 1880, Roberts Papers, R37/84; Lytton to Griffin, pte and confdl, 21 March 1880, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/6.

115. Ibid.

116. Ibid.

117. Lytton to Haines, pte and confdl, 20 March 1880; Haines to Lytton, 20 and 23 March 1880, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/519/13.

to the resumption of that Liberal policy of 'masterly inactivity' which Gladstone thought Lytton had so dishonourably violated. The war in Northbrook's opinion had been conducted "in defiance of the most elementary military principles."[118] Everything had been left to chance, and we had drifted from one awkward situation to another, "fondly dreaming that all was right." The scientific frontier, "that creation of Sir G.Colley" and the vision of the Intelligence Department, had been completely discredited.[119] Unconditional withdrawal, refusing to take "one acre of Afghan soil," would have remunerative political effects in India and Europe "where our reputation for disinterestedness has suffered by the appropriation of Cyprus."[120] "For goodness sake," Hartington echoed to Ripon, "get us out of Afghanistan as quick as you can."[121] By September 1881, in defiance of the recorded protests of the Duke of Cambridge, Napier, Rawlinson, Stewart and Roberts, the Intelligence Department and the Political Committee of the Home Council,[122] and largely upon the advice of Norman, Adye and Baring, Hartington

118. Northbrook to Ripon, pte, 30 July 1880, Ripon Papers, Add.MSS.43570; Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/19.

119. Same to same, pte, 19 July 1880, ibid.

120. Same to same, pte, 22 September 1880, ibid.

121. Hartington to Ripon, most pte, 9 July 1880, Ripon Papers, Add.MSS.43565.

122. 'Confidential Memorandum on Candahar,' Sir H.Rawlinson, 25 September 1880; 'Note on Candahar,' Lord Napier, 12 October 1880; 'Memorandum on our Future Policy in Afghanistan,' C.J.East, 16 August 1880, endorsed by Alison and Wolseley. IO.PSR.

and Ripon had completed the evacuation of Afghanistan.[123]

The second development of abiding significance to the 'defence of India' question catalysed by the second Afghan War concerned the issue of the reorganisation of the Indian Army for offensive trans-frontier operations against a European army. Flattering the ex-War Minister as "a brilliantly successful administrator at the War Office" during the vital transitional stage of British military reform at a time of impending war with Russia, and impressed with the apparent efficacy of the Reserve system in England during that crisis, as early as June 1878, Lytton broached the subject of Indian army reform to Cranbrook hoping thereby to enlist from England what was lacking in India - that widespread, informed and powerful civilian support in press and Parliament that had since Herbert's day introduced and carried all great military improvements in England against military prejudice and conservatism:[124]

At home, there is always a strong outside opinion which you can bring to bear directly on obstructive military authorities. You have a Civilian War Minister, with a Civilian War Office. You have, in Parliament, numbers of men possessing more or less military experience, and personally interested in the improvement of the army - men who are often troublesome bores, but who are useful when you want to push forward a

123. 'Note on the Retention of Candahar,' confdl, H.W.Norman, 20 September 1880; 'Memorandum on the Retention of Candahar and Pishin,' confdl, E.Baring, 7 October 1880; S.of S. to G.of I., no.45, secret, 11 November 1880, IO.PSR; PRO/CAB/37/1; Northbrook to Ripon, 25 June 1880, Ripon Papers, Add.MSS.43570.

124. Lytton to Cranbrook, pte and confdl, 14 June 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/77.

great reform. And, lastly, you have a Press, through which the younger, more advanced and more intelligent officers of your army can get a hearing for their views and aspirations. Here, in India, we have not a single one of these controlling influences. The army rules itself. The Commander-in-Chief is a member of the Government, with a seat in the Council. He is a great officer, second only in power to the Viceroy himself: the natives call him "the Great War Lord," as they call the Viceroy "the Great Peace Lord." The War Minister, and the War Office (or what answers to these in the Government of India), are all military; and they are as saturated with purely military traditions and prejudices, as are the Commander-in-Chief and his officers. There are, neither in nor out of the Government, any civilians who have time, or inclination, to deal with great military questions: and there is no 'public opinion.'[125]

He maintained on the one hand that the Indian Army was the "only large army in the world which has no reserve, - absolutely no means of expansion in wartime," and which maintains in peace at great cost and no increase in efficiency its complete war establishment; and on the other that improved weapons, railways, a police force and a stationary and docile population, in strengthening Britain's military grip upon India tenfold, made the conditions for the creation of such a reserve possible. He therefore proposed appointing in India a Committee "in which modern military science and experience, - Indian military experience and traditions, - Indian local and administrative knowledge, - and last, but not least, Indian financial interests, - should all be represented."[126] It was "absolutely necessary" that it should be presided over by "a man of high reputation and wide experience" such as Simmons, Wolseley, Chesney ("a man

125. Ibid.

126. Ibid.

of creative and constructive genius")[127] but especially Home whose "association with the Intelligence Department...the Mobilisation of the English Army, and the special knowledge of foreign army systems render him the best possible authority on the working of the Reserve system"[128] to "lead its deliberations in a right direction, and to correct the assumptions of an experience, exclusively acquired under the backward condition of military service in India."[129] The object of the Committee would be to make (what had never been made before) an "intelligible review" of "the whole military position" in India, and its actual military requirements for peace and war purposes.

Although he turned to Generals Foster, Pears and Johnson for advice,[130] Cranbrook's reaction to this "most pressing" matter, now that he was safely esconced in the Lords, was lukewarm; he judged the moment "hardly opportune for a great change;"[131] he felt that neither Simmons, Wolseley, Chesney, least of all Home could be spared or were even appropriate choices;[132] and he seemed "half-inclined" to adopt the Duke of Cambridge's proposal that matters of reform, which were bound to become controversial and unsettle the

127. Ibid; 9 September and 11 October 1878, ibid.

128. Ibid.

129. Same to same, pte and confdl, 14 June 1878, ibid.

130. Cranbrook to Lytton, 7 October 1879, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/4; Foster to Cranbrook, 7 and 13 August 1878, Cranbrook Papers, T501/47.

131. Same to same, 3,7 and 20 August 1879, ibid.

132. Same to same, confdl, 11 November 1878, ibid, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/516/3.

Native Armies, be confined to a secret and confidential Horse Guards' committee comprising himself, the Commamder-in-Chief, Norman, Johnson and Dillon.[133] At this stage the war intervened; and the matter rested until February when, the campaign having raised a fresh crop of controversies, and aggravated a number of old ones, Lytton began again pressing for an Indian Commission and manoevring to bring Wolseley to India in some reforming capacity, but preferably as Commander-in-Chief to replace Haines. "From a military point of view," Lytton wrote to Strachey, "the campaign has taught some important lessons which will I hope be duly taken to heart. It has proved the utter rottenness of our Commissariat, the necessity of a Reserve system, the blind stupidity of the Head-Quarter Staff, the complete incompetence of Sir Sam Browne, and the undoubted Military Genius of General Roberts."[134] In a letter to the Duke of Cambridge on 20 February,[135] Lytton asserted that in tackling these "urgent" questions of "great delicacy," "mere military advice will be comparatively useless." "What is wanted," he wrote in clear reference to Wolseley or some "other English officer of adequate status," "is the advice, and, if necessary, the available cooperation of some scientific soldier, with a thoroughly good organizing head on his shoulders, administrative experience and political judgement. The work now before us is essentially one of organization and re-construction. In carrying it out we shall be little

133. Cranbrook to Lytton, n.d., 1878, ibid.

134. Lytton to Strachey, 30 July 1879, Strachey Papers.

135. Same to Cambridge, pte, 20 February 1879, Lytton Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.E.218/518/4.

helped by the most brilliant beau sabreur, or the most methodical routinier. Nor does our need lie in the direction of a purely financial soldier like Mansfield, or a mere beaurocrat, like Norman."

Wolseley is the man, of all others, whom I should most like to see Commander-in-Chief in India; his appointment in that capacity would be just, being well merited; and I am persuaded that it would be most beneficial to the Indian army. If unwelcome at first to some of the old-fashioned officers, it would, I feel sure, be warmly welcomed by all the younger, brighter, and more energetic spirits in the army; and I should be much surprised if, when five years afterwards he laid down his command, it was not with a general recognition on the part of the Indian army that it had never had a more popular and efficient executive head....

The appointment of Sir Garnet Wolseley to succeed Sir Frederick Haines would, I think, be one of the greatest and most practical benefits which H.M.G. could confer upon India in the present condition of these important military questions. But, if this be impossible, I do earnestly hope, for the sake of India, and for the sake of my successor, whoever he may be, that the next Commander-in-Chief and the next Military Member will not be men virtually imposed upon India by H.R.H. for the purpose of obstructing everything that is reasonable and requisite, and perpetrating everything that is super-annuated and mischievous, in military matters....[136]

It would seem that about the same time overtures were made through Colley to prepare Wolseley for the Indian command; for on 16 February, Wolseley wrote to Salisbury:[137]

I hear from India that the Viceroy and his recognized Military advisers are at sixes and sevens. Sir Neville Chamberlain very ill, and the Commdr.-in-Chief likewise incapacitated by ill health from any work. If both come home it is possible I might obtain the vacant post, as I hope that being here might not be considered a good reason

136. Same to Cranbrook, 28 October 1879; pte and very confdl, 16 March 1880, Cranbrook Papers, T501/42 and 53.

137. Wolseley to Salisbury, 16 February 1879, loose papers, Salisbury Papers.

for passing me over. I believe that great reforms are possible in the Indian Army, and I should like to carry them out before I turn into the cut-and-dry old General to whom reforms are an abomination. All the young school of soldiers are well aware that considerable reforms are required in our home army also, but as I am known to hold these views I can never hope for any good military position in England under the existing Regime at the Horse Guards. My only opening is therefore in India...which I suppose I may regard as the only probable outlet for legitimate ambition....

Home's death of typhoid fever while serving on the Bulgarian Frontier Commission, and Wolseley's assumption of the Zulu command tightened the circle of available officers sufficiently qualified to undertake reform on a large scale; and with Haines "so weak, obstinate and incompetent," Johnson mentally affected by a paralytic seizure and Chamberlain aged and ill, Lytton decided to entrust the work of the Commission to "the younger and more advanced school of military officers in India itself" such as Roberts, MacGregor and Collen, presided over by the vigorous and impartial Lt.-Governor of Bombay, Sir Ashley Eden.[138] Eden's terms of reference were to conduct a "comprehensive and exhaustive" investigation, "embracing in fact the whole subject of military organisation and expenditure in India." He was requested "to study carefully the improvements in administration which have been recently introduced into the British and other European armies, and consider how far such changes can advantageously be introduced into the Indian Armies." "The great problem of modern military organisation is to provide the largest and most efficient force in war

138. Lytton to Roberts, pte and very confdl, 11 June 1879, Roberts Papers, R37/11.

with the smallest peace establishment, and it is to the solution of this problem that the labours of your Commission must especially be directed."[139] Although he at first approached his task with some misgivings as "an immense personal inconvenience and worry," and whose findings and recommendations would be ultimately shelved, Eden's initial survey convinced him of the magnitude and gravity of the weaknesses of Indian military administration:[140]

> Nothing can, I think, be worse or more weak, inefficient and muddled than the whole system of army administration in India. There is not a single branch of it which is not admittedly disorganised, and the whole and sole aim of every head of a department has hitherto been to prevent any reform not only from being introduced, but even discussed. No one discouraged discussion more than our friend Norman, and really military reorganisation has hitherto been limited to reducing the cost of a bullock-cart here and a sweeper, or water-carrier there, while all the great questions of administration have been absolutely tabooed. The result is that the army is now found to be quite incapable of the work it has to perform. We have wretched, weak and inexpansive cadres scattered about the country in hundreds of little insignificant stations whence they cannot be got when they are wanted without leaving half of their strength for depot duties and guards. The cost of officers and regimental establishments is out of all proportion to the number of fighting men they give. There is no system of recruiting, no system of reserves; the pension rules are declared by every officer in the army to be an unmitigated evil; we have no system of transport; the whole system of command is disorganised and wasteful; and the administration at head-quarters is admittedly altogether rotten.

The Commission's most controversial recommendations, arrived at after three months' deliberations and leaked to

139. Letter of Instructions, Burne to Eden, no.202, 7 July 1879, encl. in G.of I. to S.of S., no.68, 1879, IO.PSR.

140. Eden to Northbrook, 11 February 1879, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/20.

the Press before the Horse Guards could suppress them, were four-fold. To establish the primacy of political over military control which Lytton's experience in the making of military policy under the new conditions had shown to be dangerously ill-defined, and to ensure that the high command of the Indian Army was vested in the Government of India rather than in the powers of patronage of the Horse Guards, the Commission called for the removal of the Commander-in-Chief from the Supreme Council and his subordination to the Military Member who would now administer a unified War Ministry retaining the Commander-in-Chief as his principal adviser. This would tend in Lytton's opinion to mitigate the evils of the system whereby both the Commander-in-Chief and Military Member were appointees of Marlborough House chosen with "a view rather to personal predilections, or to official convenience at home, than to any well-understood recognition of the real requirements of the Government of India about which absolutely nothing was known, except at second-hand, and only then through this self-appointed media."[141] The Commander-in-Chief's constitutional position in respect of the Military Member would be analagous to that in England of the Duke of Cambridge in respect of the War Minister. Secondly, it called for the amalgamation of the Presidential Armies into four localised army corps. In the third place, it suggested the integration of the Adjutant-General and the Quarter-Master-General Departments into a single General Staff responsible for the preparation of offensive and defensive schemes of war.

141. Lytton to Cranbrook, pte and confdl, 24 September 1879, Cranbrook Papers, T501/31.

Finally, and most importantly, it urged the creation of an Indian Army Reserve with all the paraphernalia of modern warfare.

The objections raised against the Commission and its recommendations were several and not altogether consistent: that its inception was inopportune, that its hearings were too brief and its conclusions therefore necessarily superficial, that its composition was too military in character; that its investigations which should have been confined to the Military Department had transgressed its frame of reference, had failed sufficiently to account for the possibility of internal rebellion, and did not accurately represent the venerable Napier-Chamberlain school of Indian warfare; that some of its signatory members were engaged in operations when the final recommendations were drafted.[142] But the real roots of these criticisms, expressed in dissenting minutes by Haines and Johnson, lay elsewhere: in the fear of personal misfortune and loss that the introduction of Eden's reforms entailed.[143] Lytton had good cause to observe that "if all the magnificent mediocrities of the Horse Guards, and all the powerful personal influences, and professional proclivities, which have had their wicked will upon the Zulu campaign, are, with unabashed pretension, to decide the vital questions of Army Reform in India, then

142. 'Minute by the Commander-in-Chief on a Discussion in Council on 7 May 1879, on the Reduction and Re-organisation of the Army, and on a Despatch to the Secretary of State for India, 20 May 1879,' encl. in G.of I. to S.of S., no.168, 1879; 'Minute by Sir E.Johnson, 27 May 1879,' encl. in G.of I. to S.of S., no.179, 2 June 1879, IO.PSR.

143. Eden to Northbrook, 11 February 1879, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/20.

God help us!...."[144] From the start the Duke of Cambridge has suspected that the Viceroy's vicious contempt for his official military advisers had been sedulously cultivated by Colley, a man admittedly of "great ability" but "dangerous, most ambitious, full of theories of his own...whatever those may be," and "the representative and Apostle" of those "of his bosum friend Sir Garnet Wolseley."[145] He was incensed that "Colley & Co." should have prejudiced the Viceroy's military policy and that "whatever these think or say is Gospel to him & he will admit of no contradiction." "Really," he bitterly complained to Cranbrook, "you must forgive me but it is disgusting how this set go on & ride rough-shod over me & in fact over us all. There are certain things one cannot stand & I confess this is one of them. Lord Lytton is responsible no doubt for all matters in India, but he has no right to command the Army through Colley. The Comdr.-in-Chief in India is the man to be looked to for that, with the Military Member of Council & the Adjutant-General." If the Viceroy would only not interfere with them "all would go on as smoothly as possible."[146] Eden's recommendation that the Commander-in-Chief be removed from the Supreme Council, therefore, combined with Wolseley's somewhat indiscreet and irregular methods in advertising his claim to the Indian command,[147] filled the Duke of Cambridge with implacable alarm. "The fact is," he wrote Cranbrook, "it

144. Lytton to Cranbrook, pte, 16 August 1879, Cranbrook Papers, T501/31.

145. Cambridge to Cranbrook, pte and strictly confdl, 2 and 23 April, 27 September 1879, Cranbrook Papers, T501/268.

146. Same to same, pte and confdl, 16 September 1879, ibid.

147. Same to same, pte and strictly confdl, 2 April 1879, ibid.

is a great plot, for Wolseley to be put at the head of the Indian Armies worked by Colley, when he would be surrounded by Greaves, Baker, Baker Russell, all his own men, and the Governor-General being in the hands of Colley also his creature in Military matters & views & then the Indian Armies would be destroyed & upset in all their old traditions & details as he has done by our own Army by his introduction of all the new-fangled notions & ideas, which we are now suffering from to such a deplorable extent...I sincerely hope for the sake of the Indian Native Armies & for the interests of the Empire, he may not be selected" as Commander-in-Chief.[148] Exploiting the full weight of the Queen's position,[149] Stanley's feebleness of character, Cranbrook's reluctance to engage in controversy, the Cabinet's absorption in election affairs, and the Liberal Government's aversion to an aggressive military policy in India, the Duke of Cambridge managed to prolong Wolseley's appointment in South Africa until such time as a compromise solution could be worked out;[150] the cautious Stewart or Chamberlain, rather than Wolseley or Roberts, would replace Haines as Commander-in-Chief;[151] Wolseley would be kept in England as Quarter-Master-General, Roberts away from Vice-Regal Lodge as Commander-in-Chief Madras; while Colley would be removed from India to replace Wolseley in South Africa. In this way,

148. Same to same, pte, 16 April 1880, ibid.

149. Cranbrook to Beaconsfield, pte, 28 September 1879, Hughenden MSS, B/XX/Ha/207.

150. Preston, Wolseley's Journal of the Zulu War.

151. Hartington to Ripon, 21 October 1880, Ripon Papers, Add.MSS.43570.

wrote the Duke of Cambridge, "we should then get rid of several awkward susceptibilities which otherwise would probably give trouble."[152]

The Liberal assumption that Indian army reform had been a deliberately provocative part of Lytton's repugnant forward policy proved fatal to the Eden Commission Report. By June 1880, it still remained unpublished, out of deference, Eden believed "to the wishes of H.R.H., the Duke of Cambridge." "The army appears to be looked upon as his private property," he told Northbrook, "and as he disapproves of everything in the shape of reform, he has brought influence to bear to prevent the publication of our Report, though the grossly inaccurate and extremely childish criticism of his supporters has been made available to the public, and every attempt has been made by the hangers-on of the Horse Guards here and at home to deceive the army and the public as to the nature of our proposals."[153] Ripon doubted whether, as Northbrook and Brownlow claimed, Wolseley's susceptibilities would prove embarrassing or dangerous,[154] but in spite of repeated appeals to Hartington to dissociate the Report's recommendations from the vindictive political atmosphere

152. Ibid.

153. Eden to Northbrook, 31 May 1880, Northbrook Papers, IO.MSS.Eur.C.144/20. On 3 February 1880, the Duke of Cambridge wrote to Ripon, "I was in hopes that the dreadful Army Commission would have been pigeon-holed, on your assuming office, at all events...postponed as I believe it to be most dangerous for our interests in our great Indian Empire." Ripon Papers, Add.MSS.43570.

154. Hartington to Ripon, 21 October 1880; Northbrook to same, 25 June 1880, Ripon Papers, Add.MSS.43570.

and assess them on their own merits in terms of the genuine military demands of India,[155] he could do little to overcome the obstructiveness of the Home Council, Childers, the Duke of Cambridge, Thompson and Knox, or the apathy of the Cabinet as a whole, and in 1884, the Report was finally shelved.[156]

155. G.of I. to S.of S., no.85, 28 February 1881, Ripon Papers, Add.MSS.43585.

156. Hartington to Ripon, 24 June, 8 and 21 July, 5 August 1881, Ripon Papers, Add.MSS.43565.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUSION.

At first glance it would seem that the events set on foot by Cavagnari's massacre revealed the essential artificiality of the Treaty of Gandamak, invalidated Colley's concept of Indian defence, and vindicated the Lawrentian school of frontier policy. In much the same way it would appear that the continued breakdown of Turkish administration in Asia Minor, the re-unification of Bulgaria and the subsequent occupation of Egypt had effectively abrogated and nullified all the important features of Beaconsfield's necessarily experimental Near Eastern policy. But this impression should not blind us to the significance of what in reality had been achieved. For the first time in Indian history, the question of Indian defence had been scientifically analysed in relation to the new conditions of warfare, of Russian imperial development, and of international diplomacy. Gladstone's attempt to return to the status quo ante, characterised by his withdrawal of the military consuls and by his refusal to countenance Roberts' appointment as Military Member because of his "dangerously forward" views, was unrealistic and anachronistic: and even Hartington was moved to admit that the denouement of the Afghan War had "not discredited the advanced school" as much as he had expected.[1]

It is perhaps true, as A.J.P.Taylor asserts, that so far as Britain's relations with Europe were concerned "the resounding achievement of 1878 weakened the effectiveness of British policy in the long run; for it led the British public to believe that they could play a great role

1. Hartington to Ripon, 11 February and 11 March 1881, Ripon Papers, BM.Add.MSS.43566.

without expense or exertion - without reforming their navy, without creating an army, without finding an ally. Great Britain acquired a capital of prestige which lasted for exactly twenty years: then she tried to draw on a capital which was no longer there."[2] But it should always be borne in mind that the solution to the crisis - any crisis - is intelligible only in the context of the situation as it presents itself to the soldiers, statesmen and officials at the time. A general European war was averted; and that after all was no mean achievement and was indeed a good deal more than many would have reasonably hoped or expected. The ultimate solution to the Turkish question lay not with the European powers but with Turkey herself; and as the Great War was to show she was far from being incapable of drawing upon her traditional powers of defence. In the Near East, British influence remained predominant largely because of Gladstone's occupation of Egypt - a step made easier and morally less distasteful by the annexation of Cyprus - and continued Russian advances in Central Asia. But in Central Asia, the only possible solution - an Anglo-Russian agreement on spheres of influence - took another thirty years fully to achieve; and henceforth throughout this period the 'defence of India' remained the foremost strategic problem confronting British soldiers and statesmen. Thus, from the British point of view, the most profound, far-reaching and enduring results of the Eastern Crisis were not political or European but Indian and military.

The inefficient state of naval intelligence and preparedness, so deplored by Smith, prompted Colomb to

2. Taylor, Mastery of Europe, p.250.

begin campaigning for the establishment of a naval intelligence department which was finally created in 1888.[3] The relative success of the mobilisation of the Reserves moved Stanley to appoint a special committee to prepare an established pattern for future mobilisation procedures - an important element that had been missing from Home's earlier work - and lent great force to Childers' arguments in further implementing Cardwell's linked-battalion scheme against the powerful opposition of the Duke of Cambridge and the Airey Commission.[4] The discreditable landings at Cyprus and Natal forced the appointment of a special committee to investigate and report upon the question of combined landings and to develop proper disembarkation procedures. In the field of military thought, a rash of studies of the military lessons of Plevna unanimously concluded that rifled artillery was ineffectual against entrenched infantry. The innocuous and for real planning purposes virtually redundant position of the Duke of Cambridge displayed throughout the crisis, combined with his vehement resistance to Wolseley's appointment as Adjutant-General ("which is almost more than he can stand") and his preference for "some reactionary officer who will do his best to resist all the reforms recently introduced and render them unworkable" moved Hartington - in sentiments that are particularly significant in view of his Commission's recommendations on War Office organisation eight years later - to doubt "whether there will be another Royal C.-in-C. and that on his retirement attempts will be made very considerably

3. J.C.R.Colomb, "Naval Intelligence and Protection of Commerce in War," J.R.U.S.I., XXV, 1881, pp.553-590.

4. WO Confdl Paper 0722, SSP.

to alter the position of his successor."[5] Moreover, the fundamental weakness in Britain's military administration, so patently revealed in the prolonged and acrimonious wrangling in the Cabinet over Merv and Constantinople, was, as Major-General Collinson had pointed out in 1874, in the absence of some form of Cabinet defence committee which would recognise and weigh equally and fully political as well as military and Indian as well as European considerations in the formulation of an imperial defence policy: within ten years this had become a basic recommendation of the Hartington Commission and the strident theme of Spenser Wilkinson and a whole school of imperial defence. For the colonial defence committee established temporarily during the emergency had by 1879 grown into a full-dress Commission, and by the late 1880s the imperial defence movement was fully launched. But at the core of the whole tendency towards a better system of imperial military organisation was the question of Indian defence. The Russian occupation of Merv, MacGregor's inflammatory and semi-official publication of The Defence of India - perhaps the most thorough and influential study of Indian defence ever undertaken by a single man - the Penjeh crisis and the Franco-Russian alliance sustained the impetus towards the scientific appraisal of Indian defence questions imparted by Colley, and converted Ripon and all successive Viceroys to his thesis. Henceforward, questions of Indian defence and the responsibility for framing its policy continued to attract some of the ablest military minds of the day - Roberts, Wolseley,

5. Hartington to Ripon, 22 and 28 September 1881, Ripon Papers, BM.Add.MSS.43567.

Hamley, Maurice, Brackenbury, Chesney, Ardagh, Kitchener and Clarke. The first labours of the Committee of Imperial Defence under Clarke's direction were concentrated on Indian defence problems; and by 1914, Indian military policy and the armies that would implement it had, largely through the efforts of Roberts, Kitchener and Curzon, taken the shape originally envisaged by Lytton and Colley. That invasion did not come in their time does not invalidate their concern, nor the strategical principles along which they acted. Rather the true measure of their accomplishment lies in the fact that invasion was not attempted.

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